Library Board Development Kit

2014

Introduction

The *Library Board Development Kit* (the *Kit*) is a tool to support new boards as they learn about their job as a board member and their library.

The *Kit* begins with a section on Board Orientation which includes a sample agenda for a board orientation session and notes for presenters. This information can be tailored and added to by libraries developing their own orientation session. Each outgoing library board, in conjunction with the CEO, should provide an orientation session for new library board members. This can be done prior to the board's first meeting. The length of time needed for a thorough orientation varies from board to board. Most orientation sessions fall in a range of two hours to a full-day session.

The other sections within this *Kit* are designed so that boards can customize and complete them at each board meeting during the first year of the term.   While it will often be the CEO who encourages the board to work through the sections as a group, board members and library staff may lead a discussion as part of the board meeting agenda. The sections may also be used as handouts at one meeting, with an opportunity for comments and questions at the beginning of the next meeting.

Individual trustees may choose to complete each section independently. The advantage in reviewing the section as a group is that the activity helps to develop a working relationship among board members. Whether used independently or as a group, after the first year of the term, the *Library Board Development Kit* should continue to be used as a key resource.

New to the 2014 edition of the *Library Board Development Kit*:
- The *Kit* includes more hyperlinks to web resources. To optimize this feature, the *Kit* is best viewed on an internet enabled desktop, laptop or mobile device.
- As we have added links to resources, we have edited out material that appeared in previous print editions if it's better accessed on the internet. The *Kit* can still be printed off in .pdf format, but secondary print material may need to be included additionally.
- Every effort has been made to ensure that links are current at the time of publication, but over time it is likely that Web addresses will no longer be accurate.

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Additional Resources

Ontario Library Service (OLS)

OLS staff keep the Professional Information A-Z current with the latest Web resources of interest to library boards. There are sub-sections on Advocacy, Board-CEO Relationship, Budgeting and Financial Control, CEO Performance Appraisal, Ethics, Duties, Responsibilities, Fundraising, Friends, Legal responsibilities, Partnerships and Strategic Alliances, Policy Writing, Recruitment, and Role of the CEO.

Over the years, the Ontario Library Service has produced an extensive list of publications to assist library trustees, including Trustee Tips, Trustee 20/20, Library Development Guides and various manuals and toolkits. These are available through the "Library Development" section of Southern Ontario Library Service website.

Ontario Library Association (OLA)

The Ontario Library Boards Association (OLBA) has developed a library board development program called Leadership by Design. All of the program materials are posted on the OLBA website at www.accessola.com/olba. The program includes an interactive tutorial, as well as Cut to the Chase, a quick reference guide for board members (in English and French); access to One Place to Look, an online library for current board development resources and programs; links to the audio workshops called "Effective Board Governance" offered through the Education Institute; and information from the "Networking with our Peers" workshops.

Recommended reading on board and governance issues

- American Library Association – United for Libraries - Trustees
- Blue Avocado (formerly Board Café) – and monthly newsletter. www.blueavocado.org.
- BoardSource
- Carver Policy Governance® Model. http://www.carvergovernance.com/pubs.htm
- CharityVillage.com
- Reed, Sally Gardner, and Jillian Kalonick. *The Complete Library Trustee Handbook*. New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, 2010.
- Risk and Governance publications from Chartered Professional Accountants Canada
- Webjunction online community for libraries.   http://www.webjunction.org/trustees

Library Board Development Kit

Overview of the Kit

1. Board Orientation
The importance of board orientation sessions Sample board orientation policy Basic guidelines for library board orientation Sample agenda for board orientation session

2. Public libraries in Ontario
Libraries and legislation Quick Reference to the *Public Libraries Act* Types of public libraries Funding of public libraries Public libraries and the provincial structure Overview of public library organizations in Ontario Principles and purpose of library service **Discussion & Exercise**: Learning about your own library

3. Legislative Authority and Responsibilities
Fundamental governance principles The legislation Director's liability Common Law Conflict of Interest Recommended practice of effective boards Indemnification and insurance Implications of the *Municipal Act* on public libraries **Discussion**: *Public Libraries Act - Questions and Answers for Public Libraries*

4. The role of the board
Governance Work of the board Area 1 - Define the purpose and direction of the library Plan Set Policy Area 2 - Clearly delegate authority Hire a qualified CEO Evaluate the CEO annually Area 3 - Advocate for library Service Accountability of the board **Discussion**: The role of the board

5. Meeting Management
Board meetings Three types of agendas Officers Committees Chairing meetings Rules of order Closed sessions and confidentiality Code of conduct Minutes Preparation for meetings **Discussion**: Checklist to evaluate your meetings
6. Financial Oversight

Financial Role of the Board
Board treasurer
Financial accountability to council
Real Property and Debentures
Budget process and the library board
Budget estimates to council
Financial monitoring
    a) Monthly financial reports for the board
    • What should the monthly financial report look like?
    • Knowing what questions to ask
    b) Annual audit
Financial policies
    • Procurement policies required in 2005
Discussion: How does the budget process operate in your library?

7. Key Relationships – The board, the CEO and municipal council
The board and the CEO Key responsibility areas CEO's key responsibility areas Overview of roles and responsibilities for board and CEO The board and municipal council Advocacy is critical to working with council Lobbying When Should Trustees Advocate? Group dynamics and board communication Some key communication skills **Discussion**: Building a relationship with municipal council

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8. Planning	
	What is planning? The Planning Process The board's role in the planning process The Importance of strategic thinking Selected planning tools *Creating the Future You've Imagined: A Guide to Essential Planning*. Library Development Guide # 3 *Ontario Public Library Guidelines* *The Library's Contribution to Your Community:* A resource manual for libraries to document their social and economic contribution … **Discussion**: Planning questions
9. Policy	
	Types of policy The board's role in developing policy The staff role in developing policy Written policy preserves continuity The policy manual Three steps to developing policy Consensus: A key skill in developing policy Speaking with one voice Eliciting input on your policy Review policies regularly and revise them as necessary **Discussion**: Policy checklist
10. The library board and the community	
	Why should boards focus on the relationship with the community? Community Development What is community development? Activities demonstrating that the Board is geared to community development Learn about your community Assess community assets and resources, needs and issues Making it work The board and the broader library community

Board Orientation

Board orientation is an essential part of establishing a new library board. Typically, the orientation session is the first meeting of a new board and is focused on board members reviewing and discussing roles and responsibilities. Board orientation sessions are useful for giving an introduction to governance and to the governing legislation. The orientation session also provides all board members with a common frame of reference for how the board and library operate.

The *Ontario Public Library Guidelines* stipulate the importance of a board orientation session. The *Guidelines* are an important tool that libraries can use to implement the best practices for governance and managing library services. The *Guidelines* include the following requirements related to board orientation:

1.6 Board member Orientation and Information
Formal orientation of new library board members to library services, policies and current issues will help them to participate fully and effectively in the work of the board. On-going provision of information is necessary to keep board members up-to-date and to maintain their effectiveness.

1.6.1 Duties and responsibilities - Board members are provided with written guidelines outlining their duties and responsibilities.

1.6.2 Orientation - The board ensures that a formal orientation program is carried out for all new board members, including, for example: a tour of the library facility; an introduction to library staff; an introduction to other board members; a review of the library's planning documents, budget and recent board minutes; a review of duties and responsibilities as required by current public library and other legislation. In addition, all board members are provided with a package of background materials, including, for example: current public library legislation; the library's current planning document; the library's most recent audited financial statement; the library's current budget; the library's most recent financial report; the most recent provincial trustee materials.

These guidelines are helpful in that they provide a comprehensive list of the information that should be given to board members at the beginning of each new term.

A sample board orientation policy is also recommended and a sample can be found in the *Trillium Public Library Sample Policies* published by Southern Ontario Library Service and posted on the SOLS website at www.sols.org.

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Some Suggestions for Your Library Board Orientation

Board orientation provides information needed by board members in order to effectively carry out their roles as members of the library's board of directors. Topics to be included in the orientation session reinforce the library's purpose and mission, provide an overview of how the board operates and introduces core areas of service.

The following outline may prove useful to CEOs and boards as they develop their own board orientation session.

Timing of the Session
Conduct board orientation shortly after new members are appointed to the board. This scheduling helps new members quickly gain an understanding of the *Public Libraries Act*, their roles, and expected contributions to the library. This information often improves their comfort level and participation as board members. Conducting the orientation for all board members, including returning board members and members of council appointed to board, establishes a practice of a shared commitment to the success of the board. Returning board members will benefit from hearing the questions of new members and from contributing to the discussion of these questions. This introductory session is important for all board members as they launch the new term together.

Who Should Be Involved in Planning the Session
Design of the board orientation session should include the Chief Executive Officer, who is most knowledgeable about the library, and the board chair. The CEO manages the logistics of the meeting.

Members' Preparation for Training
Provide the board with an agenda and any additional materials at least two weeks before the meeting. Ask them to review the materials before the meeting and come prepared to discuss.

Selecting Topics and Materials for Board Orientation
The *Ontario Public Library Guidelines* provides a broad list of information that should be part of every board orientation – see below. Carefully consider the time it will take to present this information and set out a plan on how best to deliver it. It's a good idea to schedule a board orientation session outside of a regular board meeting to provide a block of time that can be used to focus on certain topics. Consider which elements are best presented at an orientation meeting and which can be included in the regular board agenda. Each of the 10 modules that make up this *Kit* can be used over the course of the board's first year of meetings.

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Materials to be provided to participants could include printed copies of the following:
  a. *Public Libraries Act, R.S.O. 1990, chapter P.44*
  b. by-laws and governance policies (samples can be found on the SOLS website)
       i.   Powers and Duties of the Board
       ii. Purpose of the Board
       iii. Duties and Responsibilities of Individual Board members
       iv. Intellectual Freedom
       v.   Delegation of Authority to the CEO
  c. written guidelines outlining board duties and responsibilities, if not in policy
     (libraries can provide a copy of OLBA's *Cut to the Chase*)
  d. the library's planning document
  e. *Library Board Development Kit* (Southern Ontario Library Service, 2014)

Sample Agenda for a Board Orientation Session

This sample agenda is one option for topics that could be covered in a two or three hour board orientation session.   The focus of this sample agenda is on public library governance.   There is less of a focus on library services, in which case the information on services would need to be expanded on at another session or at the regular board meetings.

Board Orientation - Sample Agenda

Item 1 - Welcome and Introductions
Item 2 - Review of Purpose of the Orientation
Item 3 - The Public Libraries Act
Item 4 - Role of the Board
Item 5 - The Board and the CEO – Shared leadership
Item 6 - Duties and Responsibilities of Individual Board Members
Item 7 - Introduction to Library Services – Mission and Goals
Item 8 - Library Board Development – Next Steps

Presenter's notes for the Sample Board Orientation

Item 1 - Welcome and Introductions

In most cases the presenters will be the library CEO and the board chair from the previous term. This does not have to be the case if there are other board members who would like to present a section of the agenda. Presenters will introduce themselves to the group at the beginning of the session. Some participants may be new, and introductions of everyone attending are necessary at this point. Each participant should provide some information on why they are interested in library leadership, and what motivated them to volunteer for board membership.

Sample Agenda for Board Orientation Session (continued)
Presenter's notes for the Sample Board Orientation

Item 2 - Review of the Purpose of the Orientation Session

Information on the purpose of the session should be provided. In addition to getting to know each other, participants should be told that they will be provided with information about:
- the legislative framework for public libraries
- the roles and responsibilities of the board and CEO
- governance and the operations of the board
- core library services

At this point, participants can be asked if they have any further expectations from the orientation session. If so, note these in the "parking lot" to review at the end of the meeting, or at another time. The use of a "parking lot" is one method for sticking to the agenda of any meeting and can help to capture additional issues and ideas generated throughout the session. Items are noted on a flip chart or white board. Each issue is then addressed at the appropriate time of the session and the list reviewed again at the end of the workshop for the purpose of either: addressing outstanding items; or seeking further information; or suggesting that trustees work on outstanding issues and the items be placed on the board agenda.

Item 3 - The Public Libraries Act

Under this item on the agenda, the participants will be given a thorough review of the Public Libraries Act, R.S.O. 1990, chapter P.44 (*the Act).* The *Act* is provincial legislation that governs the establishment and operations of public libraries in Ontario. It is important for board members to be aware of the areas of the *Act* that stipulate the operations of the board, the powers of the board, and the legislated requirements for the provision of library services. The *Act* includes specific directions for the first meeting of the library board.

The actual legislation runs to about 20 pages. Two documents which help people to gain an understanding of the legislation:
- Quick Reference to the *Public Libraries Act, R.S.O 1990, chapter P.44* (included in Section 2 of this Kit)
- *Public Libraries Act - Questions and Answers for Public Libraries* from the Ministry's website at http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/libraries/act_q_a.shtml

In doing the review, the specific directions from the legislation for the first meeting of the library board should be highlighted:
- The first meeting of a board in a new term shall be called by the chief executive officer if authorized by by-law of the municipal council or if no by-law has been passed by the clerk of the appointing council (Section 14(1))
- A board shall elect one of its members as chair at its first meeting in a new term (Section 14(3))

Sample Agenda for Board Orientation Session (continued)
Presenter's notes for the Sample Board Orientation

Item 4 - Role of the Board

The *Act* directs the library board to provide a comprehensive and efficient public library service that reflects the unique needs of its community.

Ask participants to share their ideas on what the work of a governing board is in order to be successful. A look at the information provided in Section 4 of *Library Board Development Kit*, referring to the Role of the Board could be helpful.   The group could also review the library board's policy on the role of the board, assuming that a policy exists.

Key points to highlight in this agenda item include:
- The board is the legal authority for the library and is responsible for the organization's highest level of decision-making
- The board is accountable for establishing the library's vision and mission and setting the rate of progress in achieving these
- The board carries out its governance function by developing and monitoring policy and delegating authority to the CEO

Item 5 - The Board and the CEO – Shared Leadership

The library board and the CEO share the responsibility to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of their library. Their work in leading the library is quite specific and requires different skills and different information from staff.   The board directs the vision and mission of the library and ensures that the community's needs have been met, but has no direct responsibility for library operations.   The board is focused on what the library should accomplish and the CEO focuses on how it is done.

To illustrate how the Board and CEO should work together in shared leadership, review the information provided in the OLBA publication called [Cut to the Chase: Ontario public library governance at-a-glance.](#)   In particular, look at the section called *The Public Library Board and the Chief Executive Officer: Who Does What?*. In addition, it would be helpful to review the library board's policy on delegation of authority to the CEO, if one exists.

Key points to highlight in this agenda item include:
- The board directs the work of the CEO through decisions made at board meetings, policies, official plans, and the budget; and,
- The CEO manages the staff, the day-to-day operations of the library and serves as a professional advisor to the board.

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Sample Agenda for Board Orientation Session (continued)
Presenter's notes for the Sample Board Orientation (continued)

Item 6 - Duties and Responsibilities of Individual Board Members

Public libraries are given corporate status in the *Public Libraries Act*. Therefore the *Corporations Act* applies in determining the duties and liabilities of members of public library boards. Each member of the library board has responsibilities by virtue of being a director of a corporation. As a board, they have collective responsibility for oversight of library operations, and they are the ultimate decision-maker with fiduciary responsibility. The duty is a "fiduciary" duty because there is an obligation to act in the best interests of the corporation. Individually, directors have a duty of care and of loyalty, and an obligation to honesty and good faith. This includes all individual board members, whether they've been appointed as a citizen representative or a council representative. Individuals on a board do not act alone or on behalf of the board unless specifically given the authority by the board as a whole.

Section 3 of the *Kit* expands on the roles and responsibilities of board members. In addition, it is useful to review local documents such as the library's code of conduct or policy on duties and responsibilities of individual board members

Key points covered in this agenda item include:
- The duties and responsibilities of municipal councilors on the board are the same as those of other board members;
- Board members prepare for all board meetings and use meetings productively;
- Board members offer opinions on issues that are subject to board discussion and show respect for the opinions of others; and,
- Board members assume no authority to make decisions outside of board meetings.

Item 7 - Introduction to Library Services

The board's role has been described as one of setting direction and ensuring progress while the CEO makes program decisions and ensures that programs achieve desired outcomes for the community. While the board should not get involved in day-to-day program decision making, it must know if the library is successful in meeting its goals. To do this the library board needs to have an understanding of the library's services and programs.

There are several activities which could be undertaken to cover this item on the agenda:
- Review the library's current vision and mission statements;
- Describe the library's service and program priorities; and,
- Describe the way in which the library's official planning documents, such as the budget, support the mission and service priorities.

Sample Agenda for Board Orientation Session (continued)
Presenter's notes for the Sample Board Orientation (continued)

Item 7 - Introduction to Library Services (continued)

Key points to be included in this agenda item include:
- Services and programs are the vehicles for achieving the library's mission; and,
- Priorities for programs and services are identified in the board's plans and budget.

Item 8 - Library Board Development – Next Steps

Library board development is about raising the quality of the board's operations. The board orientation session begins the process of library board development. The process continues with ongoing training. The board should decide at this point to continue its learning at future board meetings and take advantage of outside training offered through library partners such as OLBA, SOLS and others.

Any items that remain in the "Parking Lot" should be reviewed, and plans made for follow-up actions. The presenter should thank everyone for their contribution to the session.

Key points covered in this agenda item:
- The work of the board includes board development
- The board needs to plan for ongoing training and development
- Everyone is thanked for their participation

Public Libraries in Ontario

Libraries and Legislation

Lending libraries were introduced to Canada in the form of subscription libraries in the early 1800s. A Scottish tradition, subscription libraries required members to pay an annual fee. Mechanics' Institutes began to replace subscription libraries in the 1830's. They had a broader mandate, existing to provide 'mechanics and working men' with lectures, classes, reading rooms and lending libraries to improve literacy skills in the working class.

The first library legislation in Ontario was passed in 1851, followed in 1882 by the *Free Libraries Act*. It permitted the establishment of free public library services supported by a municipal levy and governed by a board of citizens appointed by local council.

Since that time, the Ontario government has maintained its strong interest in providing public libraries to communities across the province. Although considered a local service, public libraries are established and guided by legislation at the provincial level. The official name of the legislation for public libraries is *Public Libraries Act, Revised Statutes of Ontario, chapter P44*. A copy of this provincial legislation can be obtained through the E-laws/legislation section of the Ontario government website at www.ontario.ca.

The *Public Libraries Act, R.S.O. 1990, chapter P.44* (the *Act*) specifies three major responsibilities for public library boards:

1. **Accountability to municipal council**

    The board must submit budget estimates and an audited financial statement to council each year (Section 24 (1), (2) and (7)). The board must seek council approval to acquire and dispose of real property and to raise funds through debentures (Section 19 and Section 25).

2. **Reporting responsibilities to the province**

    The board is required to report specific statistics to the provincial minister annually. The board is also required to report on specific grants (Section 20 (f)).

3. **Provision of free public library service reflecting the needs of the community**

    Section 20(a) of the *Public Libraries Act, R.S.O. 1990, chapter P.44* directs a public library board to provide "comprehensive and efficient public library service" reflecting the community's needs. The Act goes on to direct the board regarding fees for library service.

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A summary of requirements in the *Act* is provided here:

Quick reference to the *Public Libraries Act, R.S.O. 1990, chapter P.44*

The legislation prescribes the manner in which the board operates in the following areas. All references are to the specific section of the *Act*, for example -Section 3(3).

General

- Public Library Boards are established by municipal by-law (Section 3 (1)) and are corporations (Section 3 (3)).
- Library Boards must be under the control of a board - Section 3 (3), Section 5 (3) and Section 7(7).

Appointments

- Council shall appoint at least five members to the board - Section 9(1)
- Council shall not appoint more of its own members to a board than: in the case of a public library board or union board, one less than a majority of the board; and in the case of a county library or a county co-operative library, a bare majority of the board - Section 10 (2).
- Board or municipal employees may not be board members - Section 10 (1d).
- A board member holds office for a term concurrent with the term of the appointing council or until a successor is appointed, and may be reappointed for one or more further terms - Section 10 (3).
- A person is qualified to be appointed as a member of a board who is a member of the appointing council or,
  (a) is at least eighteen years old;
  (b) is a Canadian citizen;
  (c) is,
      (i) a resident of the municipality for which the board is established in the case of a public library board, a resident of one of the municipalities for which the board is established in the case of a union board, a resident of one of the participating municipalities in the case of a county library board, or a resident of the area served by the board in the case of a county library co-operative board,
      (ii) a resident of a municipality that has a contract with the board
      (iii) a resident of the board area of a local service board that has a contract with the board,
      (iv) a member of an Indian band that has a contract with the board, or
      (v) a member of a second board that has entered into a contract with the board to purchase from it library services for the residents of the second board; and
  (d) is not employed by the board or by the municipality or county or, in the case of a union board, by any of the affected municipalities - Section 10 (1).

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Quick reference to the *Public Libraries Act, R.S.O. 1990, chapter P.44* (continued)

Disqualification

- A board member is disqualified if he or she:
  - is convicted of an indictable offence;
  - becomes incapacitated;
  - is absent from the meetings of the board for three consecutive months without being authorized by a board resolution;
  - ceases to be qualified for membership - Section 10; or,
  - otherwise forfeits his or her seat. - Section 13.

Officers of the Board

- A board elects one of its members as chair at its first meeting in a new term. In the absence of the chair, the board may appoint one of its members as acting chair - Section 14 (3).

Staff

- A board may appoint and remove such employees as it considers necessary, determine the terms of their employment, fix their remuneration and prescribe their duties - Section 15(1).

Chief Executive Officer

- A board appoints a chief executive officer who shall have general supervision over and direction of the operations of the public library and its staff, shall attend all board meetings and shall have the other powers and duties that the board assigns to him or her from time to time - Section 15(2).
- The board appoints a secretary and treasurer - Section 15(3)(4).
- The same person may be the secretary and treasurer and chief executive officer.

Meetings

- All members of the board including the chair may vote on all matters and a tie is considered negative
- A board shall hold regular meetings once a month for at least 10 months each year and at such other times as it considers necessary.
- The chair or any two members of a board may summon a special meeting of the board by giving each member reasonable notice in writing, specifying the purpose for which the meeting is called.
- Quorum - The presence of a majority of the board is necessary for the transaction of business at a meeting.
- All meetings shall be open to the public – Section 16.1(2). The *Act* provides specific directions on exceptions in various descriptions in Section 16.1.

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Quick reference to the *Public Libraries Act, R.S.O. 1990, chapter P.44* (continued)

Services

- A board provides a comprehensive and efficient public library service that reflects the community's unique need and may operate special services in connection with a library as it considers necessary - Section 20
- A board cannot charge for
  - admission to a public library or for use in the library of the library's materials - Section 23
  - reserve and borrow circulating materials that are prescribed or belong to a prescribed class (See Regulation 976) and
  - use of reference and information services as the board considers practicable
- Fees *may* be charged for:
  - other services not referred to above
  - use of the parts of a building
  - use of library services by persons who do not reside in the area of the board's jurisdiction.

Rules/Policies

- A board *may* make rules,
  - for the use of library services
  - for the admission of the public to the library
  - for the exclusion from the library of persons who behave in a disruptive manner or cause damage to library property
  - imposing fines for breaches of the rules
  - suspending library privileges for breaches of the rules; and
  - regulating all other matters connected with the management of the library and library property - Section 23 (4).

Note: This reference guide has no legislative sanction. Comments are for convenience only. For accuracy, please refer to the official volume. Board members may also refer to the Ministry's website for clarification on certain issues in the Frequently Asked Questions, posted at http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/libraries/act_q_a.shtml

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Types of public libraries

Four types of library boards are identified in the *Public Libraries Act, R.S.O. 1990, chapter P.44*:
- Public Library Boards
- Union Boards
- County Library Boards
- County Library Co-operative Boards

Municipal Public Library - The *Act* grants a single municipality the power to establish, by by-law, a public library which shall be under the management and control of a board which is known as a corporation. This corporation is known as The *(insert name of municipality)* Public Library Board; for example, The Brockville Public Library Board. A municipal public library is under the management and control of a board of no fewer than five members, which are appointed by the municipal council. The council cannot appoint more of its own members to the board than members of the public.

Union Public Library - A union public library is established by the councils of two or more municipalities making an agreement. The agreement specifies what proportion of the cost of the establishment, operation and maintenance of the union public library will be paid by each municipality. The union public library is under the management and control of a union board. The board is comprised of no fewer than 5 members appointed by the councils of the affected municipalities and in the proportions and manner specified in the agreement. The councils cannot appoint more of their own members to the board than members of the public.

County Library - A county library is established where a resolution of the councils of at least two-thirds of the municipalities forming part of the county requests that the county establish a county library. The county council passes a by-law to establish a county library. The county library shall be under the management and control of a board. A county library board is composed of at least five members appointed by county council. The county council can appoint a bare majority of its own members to the board with a minority of members from the public. A county library is a corporation known in English as The (*insert name of county*) County Library Board; for example, The Essex County Library Board.

A **county library co-operative** can no longer be established under the *Act*. Simcoe County Library Co-operative is the only co-operative in Ontario.

A note about First Nation libraries

To date, almost 40% of First Nation communities have public libraries. First Nation libraries are eligible for a 'per capita operating grant' and have access to the Ministry's First Nations Public Library Development Program. The *Public Libraries Act* is permissive, rather than prescriptive, with respect to First Nation libraries. The *Public Libraries Act*, for First Nation libraries, is a 'best practice' resource.

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Funding of public libraries

Municipal governments are the primary source of operating funds for the majority of public libraries in Ontario.   For most municipalities, this means approximately 85% of funding comes from council.

Another important source of operating funds is the Ontario government, through the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, which funds all legally constituted public library boards on an annual basis. In 1998, provincial base funding for public libraries was $4.08 per household (urban rate), $4.80 per household (smaller rural rate) and $1.50 per capita (First Nations). The amount that a library receives is based on statistics provided by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs for the number of households at that time. Since 1998, the provincial base funding formula has been flat-lined. In order to receive the grant, public libraries in the province are required to complete an annual survey for their library and an Application for Public Library Operating and Pay Equity Grants, as well as provide specific financial details to the Ministry responsible for public libraries.

Contracts for service and user fees from neighbouring municipalities without their own library service provide another source of funding for some public libraries.

Sources of revenue for special library projects and capital projects include: project grants from the provincial government, Ontario Trillium Foundation, development charges or other special funding from municipal governments, funds generated internally by public libraries through rental charges for meeting rooms and equipment, occasional infrastructure programs, Friends of the Library and other local fund-raising, donations and bequests.

Public Libraries and the Provincial Structure

The Municipal Role

    Public library service is a municipal service. The cornerstone of the Ontario public library system is the local public library. Each local public library is controlled and administered by a local public library board appointed by the local municipal or county council.

The Provincial Role

    Provincial responsibility for public library service rests with the Culture Division of the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. The Minister and his or her staff are responsible for the administration of the *Public Libraries Act* and develop provincial policies for the public library systems across Ontario. The Ministry provides direct support of local public library service through an annual, per household grant to the local library and administers a variety of special purpose grants available to local public libraries. The Ministry maintains statistics on public libraries in Ontario. These statistics are compiled using data from the *Annual Survey of Public Libraries*.

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Public Libraries and the Provincial Structure (continued)
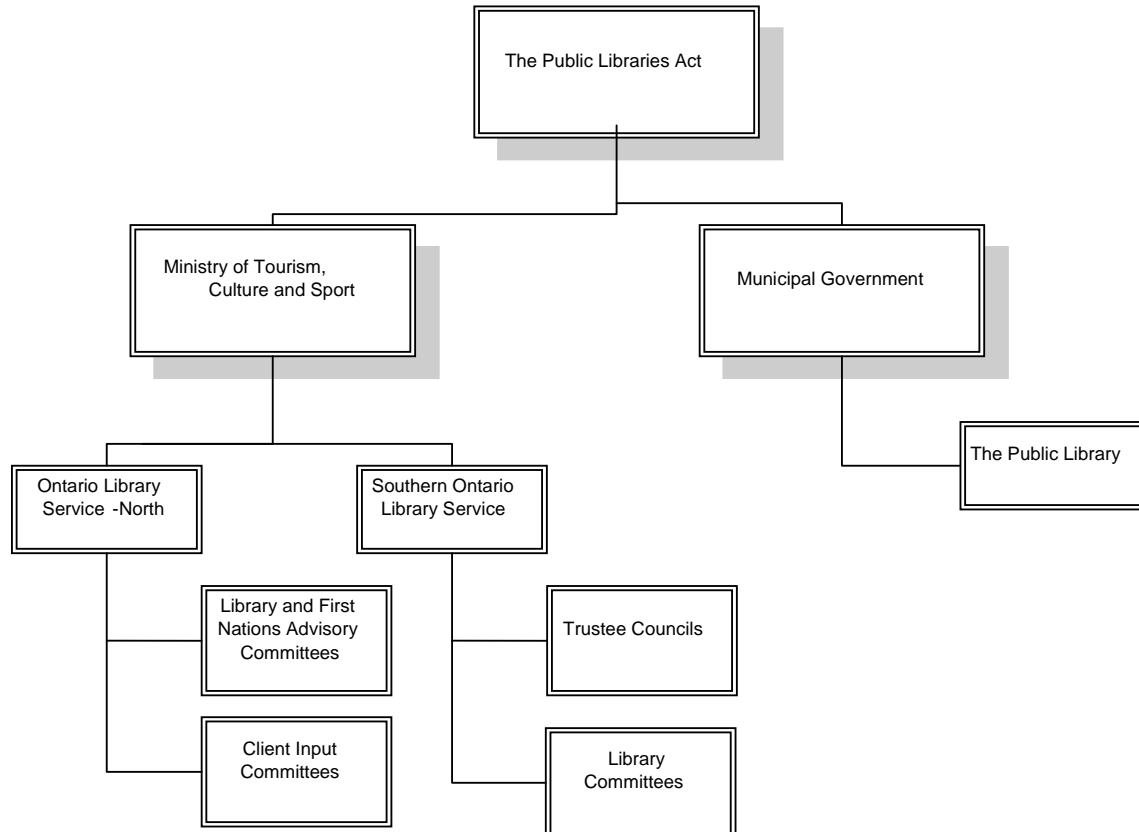
The Ontario Library Service

In addition to direct support to public libraries, the provincial government also funds two agencies.

The **Southern Ontario Library Service** (SOLS) delivers programs and services to southern Ontario, excluding the City of Toronto. SOLS promotes co-operation and co-ordination among public library boards and information providers, and also provides inter-library loan, resource sharing, consulting, training and development services.

The **Ontario Library Service-North** (OLS-North) delivers programs and services to northern Ontario by increasing co-operation and co-ordination among public library boards and information providers, and also offers consulting, training and development services.
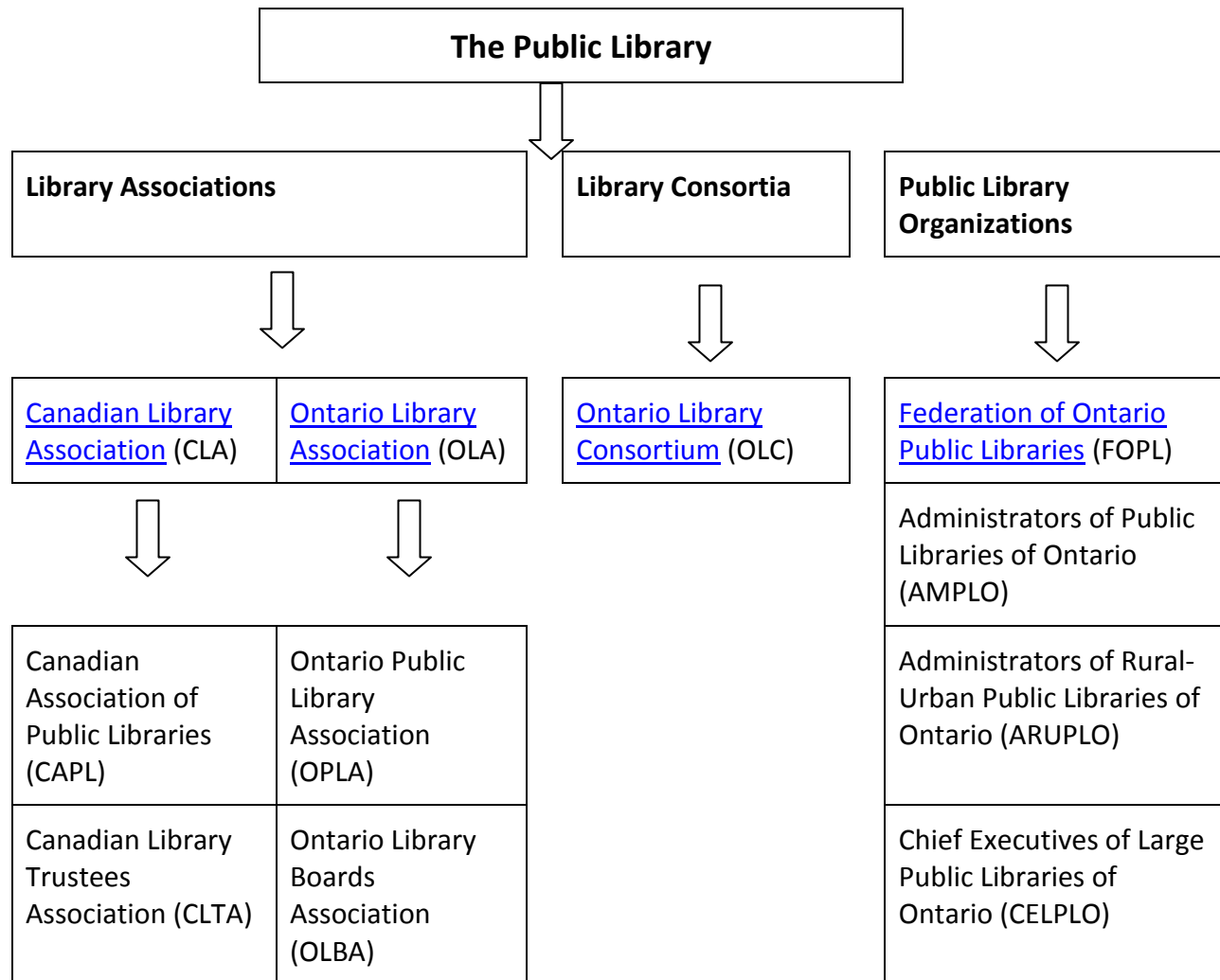
OLS-North has the added responsibility "to develop equitable and maximum access to library services and resources for the residents of northern Ontario".

Provincial Structure of Public Libraries in Ontario

Library Board Development Kit

The Ontario library community:

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                    ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                    │     The Public Library      │
                    └─────────────────────────────┘
                                  ↓
   ┌──────────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────────┐
   │ Library Associations │  │ Library Consortia│  │ Public Library       │
   │                      │  │                  │  │ Organizations        │
   └──────────────────────┘  └──────────────────┘  └──────────────────────┘
             ↓                        ↓                      ↓
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Canadian Library Association (CLA)	Ontario Library Association (OLA)

Ontario Library Consortium (OLC)

Federation of Ontario Public Libraries (FOPL)
Administrators of Public Libraries of Ontario (AMPLO)
Administrators of Rural-Urban Public Libraries of Ontario (ARUPLO)
Chief Executives of Large Public Libraries of Ontario (CELPLO)

↓   ↓

Canadian Association of Public Libraries (CAPL)	Ontario Public Library Association (OPLA)
Canadian Library Trustees Association (CLTA)	Ontario Library Boards Association (OLBA)

Library Board Development Kit

Overview of public library organizations in Ontario

Name of organization	Primary roles	Membership
Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/libraries/libraries.shtml	The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport has responsibility for the administration of the *Public Libraries Act*. The Ministry's Programs and Services Branch develops provincial policies for the public library system.	Not applicable.
Southern Ontario Library Service (SOLS) www.sols.org Ontario Library Service–North (OLS-North) www.olsn.ca	The Ontario Library Service - North and the Southern Ontario Library Service deliver programs on behalf of the Ministry. SOLS and OLS-North provide services to expand local library collections and realize economies of scale (interlibrary loan, consortia purchasing, pooled collections, licensing of e-collections), train staff and trustees and provide information and expertise for local library issues.	Ontario is divided geographically and all public libraries, except the City of Toronto, are served by either SOLS or OLS-North.
Chief Executives of Large Public Libraries of Ontario (CELPLO)	These organizations are all primarily networking groups. They will also take on projects of interest to their membership such as CELPLO's study of shared-use library facilities or ARUPLO's annual training event for branch staff.	Open to CEOs of public libraries serving a population of 100,000 or more.
Administrators of Medium-Size Public Libraries of Ontario (AMPLO)		Open to CEOs of public libraries serving between 15,000 and 100,000 populations.
Administrators of Rural-Urban Public Libraries of Ontario (ARUPLO)		Open to CEOs of county libraries and lower tier public library systems with a mix of rural and urban branches. Members of other PLOs, depending on size, may also be members of ARUPLO.
Federation of Ontario Public Libraries http://www.fopl.ca/home/	The Federation's strategic focus includes advocacy, research and development, marketing, and consortia purchasing.	FOPL is a fee-based membership nonprofit with a mandate to support Ontario public libraries.

Overview of public library organizations in Ontario (continued)

Ontario Library Association www.accessola.org	OLA is a cross-sector library membership association that provides an opportunity for library professionals and volunteers to meet, to share experience and expertise. It provides networking opportunities, education programs, conferences, coordination of mutual interests and needs, lobbying and political action, and related information, services and products.	Membership is open to any individual interested in libraries except OLBA which is open only to library boards. Members typically associate themselves with one of the divisions in OLA: • Ontario Public Library Association (OPLA) • Ontario Library Boards Association (OLBA) • Ontario College and University Library Association (OCULA) • Ontario Library and Information Technology Association (OLITA) • Ontario School Library Association (OSLA) • L'Association des Bibliothécaires Francophones de l'Ontario (ABFO)
Canadian Library Association www.cla.ca	CLA/ACB is an advocate and public voice, educator and network, building the Canadian library and information community and advancing its information professionals. The goals of Canadian Library Trustees Association (CLTA) are: to promote and support cooperation and communication; to encourage public library trustees to participate in association activities and address national issues; to represent the interests of public library trustees to government and the public; to develop training and education programs, provide forums for discussion and exchange of ideas for public library trustees.	The Canadian Association of Public Libraries (CAPL) – a subdivision of CLA - represents members of its division on matters of concern to public libraries at a national level. This division includes the Canadian Association of Children's Libraries section. CLTA – a subdivision of CLA - has members from among library trustees.

Library Board Development Kit

Principles and Purpose of Library Service

Today's public library is a community service that benefits everyone. Increasingly, the public library is recognized as a vibrant community hub where residents study, research, attend events and simply enjoy gathering and connecting with one another. While today's public library is still a place for viewing and lending of materials in various formats, it also provides Internet access; programming for all ages; spaces for community gathering and displays, but more offering are offering digital media labs and creation spaces. Library staff are trained to assist patrons in using and getting maximum benefit from the library's services. But it is the library board, made up of citizens of the community, which builds the foundation that allows the public libraries to operate and thrive.

Library service is founded on the principle of Intellectual Freedom. Both the Ontario Library Association and the Canadian Library Association have statements on the role of the library in protecting rights of individuals to read and access information. Libraries have a fundamental responsibility for the development and maintenance of intellectual freedom.

Libraries act on this responsibility by endorsing the principles – such as the one provided below from the CLA - in their policies, and resisting any attempt to restrict access to information and to ensure that the selection of materials is not influenced by personal opinions of the board or staff.

Canadian Library Association / Association canadienne des bibliothèques
Position Statement on Intellectual Freedom
Approved by Executive Council ~ June 27, 1974; Amended November 17, 1983; and November 18, 1985

All persons in Canada have the fundamental right, as embodied in the nation's Bill of Rights and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, to have access to all expressions of knowledge, creativity and intellectual activity, and to express their thoughts publicly. This right to intellectual freedom, under the law, is essential to the health and development of Canadian society.

Libraries have a basic responsibility for the development and maintenance of intellectual freedom.

It is the responsibility of libraries to guarantee and facilitate access to all expressions of knowledge and intellectual activity, including those which some elements of society may consider to be unconventional, unpopular or unacceptable. To this end, libraries shall acquire and make available the widest variety of materials.

It is the responsibility of libraries to guarantee the right of free expression by making available all the library's public facilities and services to all individuals and groups who need them.

Libraries should resist all efforts to limit the exercise of these responsibilities while recognizing the right of criticism by individuals and groups.

Both employees and employers in libraries have a duty, in addition to their institutional responsibilities, to uphold these principles.

Library Board Development Kit

Principles and Purpose of Library Service (continued)

Public libraries in Ontario are part of a world-wide community of libraries that share a common belief in the purpose of libraries and in the principles by which they should provide services. These are expressed in the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto.

UNESCO Public Library Manifesto

A gateway to knowledge

Freedom, Prosperity and the Development of society and individuals are fundamental human values. They will only be attained through the ability of well-informed citizens to exercise their democratic rights and to play an active role in society. Constructive participation and the development of democracy depend on satisfactory education as well as on free and unlimited access to knowledge, thought, culture and information.

The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups.

This Manifesto proclaims UNESCO's belief in the public library as a living force for education, culture and information, and as an essential agent for the fostering of peace and spiritual welfare through the minds of men and women.

UNESCO therefore encourages national and local governments to support and actively engage in the development of public libraries.

The Public Library

The Public Library is the local centre of information, making all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its users.

The services of the public library are provided on the basis of equality of access for all, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status. Specific services and materials must be provided for those who cannot, for whatever reason, use the regular services and materials, for example linguistic minorities, people with disabilities or people in hospital or prison.

All age groups must find material relevant to their needs. Collections and services have to include all types of appropriate media and modern technologies as well as traditional materials. High quality and relevance to local needs and conditions are fundamental. Material must reflect current trends and the evolution of society, as well as the memory of human endeavour and imagination.

Collections and services should not be subject to any form of ideological, political or religious censorship, nor commercial pressure.

Library Board Development Kit

UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (continued)

Missions of the Public Library

The following key missions which relate to information, literacy, education and culture should be at the core of public library services:

1. creating and strengthening reading habits in children at an early age;
2. supporting both individual and self conducted education as well as formal education at all levels;
3. providing opportunities for personal creative development;
4. stimulating the imagination and creativity of children and young people;
5. promoting awareness of cultural heritage, appreciation of the arts, scientific achievements and innovations;
6. providing access to cultural expressions of all performing arts;
7. fostering inter-cultural dialogue and favouring cultural diversity;
8. supporting the oral tradition;
9. ensuring access for citizens to all sorts of community information;
10. providing adequate information services to local enterprises, associations and interest groups;
11. facilitating the development of information and computer literacy skills; and,
12. supporting and participating in literacy activities and programmes for all age groups, and initiating such activities if necessary.

Funding, legislation and networks

The Public Library shall in principle be free of charge. The public library is the responsibility of local and national authorities. It must be supported by specific legislation and financed by national and local governments. It has to be an essential component of any long-term strategy for culture, information provision, literacy and education.

To ensure nationwide library coordination and cooperation, legislation and strategic plans must also define and promote a national library network based on agreed standards of service.

The public network must be designed in relation to national, regional, research and specific libraries as well as libraries in schools, colleges and universities.

Operation and management

A clear policy must be formulated, defining objectives, priorities and services in relation to the local community needs. The public library has to be organized effectively and professional standards of operation must be maintained.

Cooperation with relevant partners - for example, user groups and other professionals at local, regional, national as well as international level - has to be ensured.

UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (continued)

Services have to be physically accessible to all members of the community. This requires well situated library buildings, good reading and study facilities, as well as relevant technologies and sufficient opening hours convenient to the users. It equally implies outreach services for those unable to visit the library.

The library services must be adapted to the different needs of communities in rural and urban areas.

The librarian is an active intermediary between users and resources. Professional and continuing education of the librarian is indispensable to ensure adequate services.

Outreach and user education programmes have to be provided to help users benefit from all the resources.

Discussion: Learning about your own library

The Library CEO and board chair are responsible for providing an orientation for all library trustees. New trustees need to understand the basics of the public library and the board's authority. The following is a list of information which should be provided to all trustees as part of their orientation.

Tour of the library building(s):
> The new trustee should be given a tour of the main public library facility and should be introduced to staff members. Give the trustee a map of the library, a list of staff members, and any other public library handouts which are provided to the public. The tour should include details of each department (if there are separate areas) and its function in relation to the work of the entire library. If the library has a number of facilities, through the course of the first year, the trustees should tour as many of the facilities as possible. If possible, the board may wish to hold board meetings at various facilities.

Documentation:
- Mission statement and strategic plan
- Policy manual
- Budget
- Board minutes
- Annual report
- Library calendar (e.g., board meeting dates; key deadlines – budget to council, Annual Survey of Public Libraries; trustee training – OLS-North conferences, OLA)
- Parliamentary rules followed at board meetings
- List of current board members and contact info, e-mail addresses

Library Board Development Kit

Discussion: Learning about your own library (continued)

Information Sheet for Library Trustees

Official Library Name	
Street address of main branch or administration office	
Telephone numbers	
Library CEO	
E-mail - CEO	
E-mail - general	
Library website	

Service:

Population served: _____   Number of households: _____

Contract population, if applicable (give name of municipality and population):
_____

Name of service point/branch	Hours open per week	Accessible?
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
Total number of service points:		

Holdings and collections:
Total number of volumes held in library system (English): _____
Total number of titles held in library system (English): _____
Total number of volumes held in library system (French): _____
Total number of titles held in library system (French): _____

Circulation:
      Annual circulation: _____

Interlibrary loan:
Total number of items borrowed through interlibrary loan: _____
Total number of items lent through interlibrary loan: _____

Library Board Development Kit

Discussion: Learning about your own library (continued)

Reference:

Annual reference requests: _____

Annual library visits:

Visits to the library (based on number of visits during 'typical week'): _____

Programs:

Annual program attendance: _____

Staffing:

Professional librarians: _____
Library technicians: _____
EXCEL graduates: _____
All other staff: _____
Total staff: _____
Volunteers: _____

Awards - Listing and short description of any awards won by the library / staff

Special grants - Received by library in past year

Community partnerships - Brief description of community partnerships and program description

Current library association memberships:

Legislative Authority and Responsibility

A first step in developing good governance is to assess the current regulatory environment. There are a number of legal responsibilities and liabilities that fall upon the members of a public library board. These arise from both legislation and common law governing public libraries and corporations. Trustees need to be aware of all the requirements of their job and the responsibilities associated with it.

Fundamental Governance Principles

The legislation and common law related to governance embody two fundamental principles:

1. The board as a whole is responsible for all aspects of the library, including over-seeing its operations and holding management accountable for delivering on the mission. Boards are required to make decisions that are in the library's best interest. In reaching decisions, the board must be able to demonstrate that it took into account the impact of the decision on members and various other stakeholders.
2. Each individual board member has a fiduciary duty to the library which is comprised of two main duties:
    a. Duty of care – to act with the competence and diligence that a reasonably prudent person with similar knowledge and expertise would exercise in a comparable circumstance.
    b. Duty of loyalty – to act honestly and in good faith in the best interests of the library.

It is important to differentiate that a board member's <u>role</u> is as a member of the board, but his or her <u>responsibility</u> is as an individual. A board member cannot delegate this individual responsibility. (From: <u>Governance for Not-for-Profit Organizations: Questions for Directors to Ask</u>, Don Taylor, 2014, Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada)

These principles imply that directors are entitled to request of staff any information they require to fulfill their fiduciary and duty of care obligations. While a CEO may find such requests intrusive, they need to be sensitive to the kind of information board members need to meet their governance responsibilities.

Library Board Development Kit

The Legislation

This section on legislation has been designed to be a preliminary source of information for board members. Practical applications of the legislation are described and some examples are provided. However, the *Kit* cannot provide an answer for every situation. This is intended as general information about legislation applicable to public libraries in Ontario. The information is not interpretation or advice, and should not be treated as such. You must not rely on the information as an alternative to legal advice from a lawyer or other professional legal services provider. If you have any specific questions about any legal matter you should consult the library's lawyer or other professional legal services provider.

As discussed in the previous chapter, public libraries in Ontario are established by provincial legislation, *Public Libraries Act, R.S.O. 1990, chapter P.44*. The *Act* grants the municipality the power to create, through a by-law, a public library established as a separate corporation under the management and control of a board of trustees.

The responsibilities of a public library board are to oversee the operations of its library and to function as the ultimate decision-maker for the library with fiduciary responsibility. In carrying out this mandate, the board has accountability and legal responsibilities to the many different stakeholders in its community: the public utilizing the library, taxpayers, library employees, creditors, the appointing council, the other directors, and various levels of government. Each board member and the board as a whole have a responsibility to act in the best interest of the library to achieve its legal purpose.   The board needs to be aware of the legislative requirements of operating a public library as an employer and the financial responsibilities.

As well as the *Public Libraries Act*, the library board will also be governed by *The Municipal Act, 2001, SO 2001, c.25*; *The Municipal Conflict of Interest Act, RSO 1990, C.M.50*; and, *The Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, RSO 1990, c.M.56*. Public libraries will also be subject to relevant federal laws including the *Criminal Code*, *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and certain local by-laws. It behooves each board member to review and understand all pertinent legislation.   The following chart outlines some of the important regulations. Changes in legislation and case law may lead to changes in how laws should be interpreted and applied. Readers are reminded that it requires legal expertise to read and interpret the law and its complexities, and even then absolute certainty cannot be guaranteed.

Library Board Development Kit

Personal liability

There are many specific statutes in legislation which are of particular relevance to directors of public library boards in their personal capacity. It is important for all board members to be aware of these laws.

Legislation	Potential financial liability
Corporations Act (Ontario)	S81: directors of a corporation are jointly and severally liable to the employees for not more than 6 months wages and 12 months vacation pay (if the board has been sued for the debt within 6 months after it has become due and the employee has been unable to satisfy the debt) as well as for technical offences (e.g., failure to produce books or records to an auditor acting for the members). Resigning as a director does not automatically extinguish all of the director's liabilities.
Canada Corporations Act	Same liability for wages and vacation pay as Ontario Corporations Act except the action against the director must start within 12 months of ceasing to be a director and also for technical offences.
Income Tax Act	Personal liability on directors if the corporation fails to deduct, withhold or remit taxes.
Workplace Insurance and Safety Act	Individual directors who authorize, permit or acquiesce to any contravention of the legislation by the corporation is a party to and guilty of the offence.
Employment Standards	Individual directors who authorize, permit or acquiesce to any contravention of the legislation by the corporation is a party to and guilty of the offence.
Occupational Health and Safety Act	Directors have a legal duty to take all reasonable care to ensure that the corporation complies with the act and its regulations.
Pay Equity Act	Directors may be subject to penalty where the officer or director caused or acquiesced in the breach of the organization's statutory duty to its employees.
Employment Insurance Act	Director is liable if corporation does not deduct or remit employment insurance premiums.
Environmental Protection Legislation	All reasonable care taken to prevent discharge of contaminants.
Municipal Affairs Act	Individual directors who authorize, permit or acquiesce to any contravention of the legislation by the corporation is a party to and guilty of the offence.
Pension legislation	Director is liable if the corporation does not deduct appropriate amounts under the Canada Pension Plan.
Criminal Code	Personal liability for directors for offences such as defrauding creditors.

Common Law

There are fundamental governance principles in common law that convey the fiduciary duties of individuals on the library board. They include duty of care, duty of loyalty and conflict of interest.

Duty of care

The *Corporations Act* does not contain a statutory standard of care and so, the standard of care for directors of non-profit corporations comes from the common law. The common law duty of care was enunciated in 1925 in the case of *Re City Equity Fire Insurance Co. Ltd.* which set out a subjective test: a director must exercise that care which may be reasonably expected from someone of "his knowledge and experience". Each director is to act with the competence and diligence that a reasonably prudent person with similar knowledge and expertise would exercise in a comparable situation. As such, each board member must take responsibility for his or her own position on the board and be knowledgeable about the work of the board. As an example, there is an expectation that every board member reviews the board package and be aware of the business of the board, even if he or she does not attend a meeting.

Duty of loyalty

Each board member is also required to act honestly and in good faith for the best interests of the library. This duty speaks to the loyalty of all board members to the work of the library board regardless of other boards or committees they sit on or other organizations or councils they represent. The duty of loyalty to the work of the library board ensures that all issues and concerns are fully discussed; decisions are understood and agreed upon and in the end made by the board as a whole.

These two duties incorporate other good governance concepts, including:

Diligence – A director is obligated to make those inquiries that he or she would make in managing his or her own affairs. Once again, this is a subjective test based on the knowledge and experience of the director. This takes the practical form of being prepared for and attending all board meetings. It is important to note that a director cannot relieve himself or herself of this duty by relying on other directors or by doing nothing or by being willfully blind to wrongful acts of the board as a whole, or other directors individually.

Skill – A director is measured as to the degree of skill expected from a person of the director's knowledge and experience. If a director has a particular skill or area of expertise, he or she must use that knowledge for the benefit of the library.

Prudence - A director must act carefully, deliberately, and cautiously, and must try to foresee the probable consequences of a proposed course of action.

Library Board Development Kit

Conflict of Interest

Conflict of interest can arise in two major ways:

1. Where a director is motivated by considerations other than the best interests of the library; or

2. Where the director has a personal interest in a contract with the board either as an individual or as a member of another organization.

Also note that the concept of personal gain is considered as a conflict of interest.

While the *Corporations Act* provides a procedure for dealing with conflict of interest for corporations, the ***Municipal Conflict of Interest Act, R.S.O. 1990, chapter M.50*** provides a much more detailed code of conduct. In the *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act,* the interest of a director is specifically stated to include the interest of a parent, spouse, or child. In disclosing the interest, the director is also specifically prohibited from participating in the discussion and, if it is in a public meeting (which the *Public Libraries Act* requires in most cases), then the director must actually leave the meeting.

The *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act* further provides that an elector can bring the director before a judge to determine the question of conflict at any time within six years from the date of the alleged conflict. Section 10 provides the remedies when a judge declares that a member has breached the provisions of the *Act* and that includes the power to declare the seat of the member vacant, disqualify the member for a period of not more than seven years, and require the member to make restitution to the party or the municipality or local board suffering the loss. Finally, the *Act* also has a procedure which allows a board to obtain the authority necessary to discuss an issue if the conflict results in two or fewer directors being available for a vote.

It is recommended that all libraries have a conflict of interest policy, and/or a code of conduct for board members that include procedures for dealing with conflicts of interest. The following list gives boards some suggestions for recommended practice for effective and transparent governance.

Library Board Development Kit

Recommended practice for effective boards
(Adapted from *Duties and Responsibilities of Directors in Canada,* by J.M. and Mark Wainberg)

1. Attend all meetings of the board.

2. Insist on receiving, and then reading, before each meeting, all documents and reports on which there will be a vote.

3. Review all minutes of meetings.

4. Keep personal notes of the meetings.

5. Keep all minutes and notes in one notebook or folder, along with any other important documents, such as lists of current directors and staff, all written library policies, any special reports, reports to municipal council or the Ministry, etc.

6. Insist on written legal opinions for any important step about to be taken.

7. Insist on written professional opinions from specialists on whose advice the board is expected to act. As well, if a director is a specialist, but a matter comes up which is not within his or her area of expertise, at least put it on the record, if the board does not get an outside opinion.

8. Insist on the minutes recording any disclosure made by any director or a director's refraining from voting or a director's dissent.

9. Vote against any disbursement if there is any question of the solvency of the board.

10. Send a letter by registered mail to the board, with a copy to the municipal council, if the secretary or chairman refuses to record a disclosure, or refraining from a vote, or dissent.

11. Be familiar with relevant legislation, such as the *Public Libraries Act, R.S.O. 1990, chapter P.44.*

12. Be familiar with the library's program and personnel.

13. Consult with your insurer to conduct a risk appraisal and follow up on problem areas, such as staff and volunteer training.

14. Have regular meetings, more than required, if necessary.

15. Review the library insurance on a regular basis.

Library Board Development Kit

Indemnification and insurance

The Corporations Act permits a corporation to indemnify a director in respect of costs incurred defending himself or herself from an action based on his or her position as a director, except for costs rising out of willful neglect or default.

> Example: *Lorenc v. Koteles (1981) 14 Man. R. (2d) 427,*
> The Manitoba Folk Arts Council sued its chairman, a lawyer, for an accounting of corporation money he paid himself as wages, without the consent of the council. The director lost the case since his actions were considered to be willful neglect or default and he was clearly acting outside his authority. Indeed, this was such an extreme situation that criminal charges were laid against the director. Note that the indemnity must be specifically given by the corporation and is not an automatic right.

Typically, insurance is recommended to back up any form of indemnity. The question of whether directors' liability insurance should be purchased is a matter of risk management and should be discussed by each board. There are no reported cases of a successful action against a director of a non-profit corporation for breach of his or her duties which would be compensable by an insurer. While there are directors' liability insurance policies for non-profit corporations which are cheaper than such policies for directors of business corporations, the expense of such insurance may be quite high in comparison to the perceived risk.

Most actions against directors are commenced by disgruntled shareholders who have a direct pecuniary interest in the outcome of the litigation. However, the reality of a public library board is that the director's appointment is more likely to be terminated by the appointing body for any breach of his or her duty than for the director to be sued. Finally, any of the biggest dangers, such as conflict situations where a profit has been made, would be excluded under directors' liability coverage or would increase the cost of the insurance coverage so as to make it absolutely prohibitive.

It is also important to note that most Ontario municipalities and counties provide insurance coverage for their local boards as well as their councils.

Recommended further reading:

- Duties and Liabilities of Directors and Officers of Charities and Non Profit Organizations
  http://www.carters.ca/pub/article/charity/2011/tsc0329.pdf

- The Legal Duties of Directors of Charities and Not-for-Profits (2012)
  http://www.carters.ca/pub/article/charity/govset/A-duties.pdf

Implications of the *Municipal Act, 2001* on Public Libraries

Public libraries in Ontario are subject to certain requirements of the *Municipal Act, 2001* because they are municipally established local boards. In December 2001, a new *Municipal Act* (Municipal Act, 2001, S.O. 2001, Chapter 25, hereinafter referred to as the *Municipal Act, 2001*) was passed by the Ontario Legislature. The *Municipal Act, 2001* gives municipalities a broad new flexibility to deal with local circumstances and to react quickly to local economic, environmental or social changes. New features of the *Municipal Act, 2001* are the transparency and accountability provisions aimed at ensuring that taxpayers can easily understand how their municipality operates. As part of this requirement, municipalities and local boards must have policies – adopted by bylaw or in the case of local boards by resolutions – that will be used for procuring goods and services as well as for the hiring of relatives.

Important information directly related to libraries is posted on the Ministry's website regarding the *Municipal Act, 2001*. The Ministry's document called **Municipal Act, 2001 - Questions and Answers for Public Libraries** is posted in the "Libraries" section of the Ministry's website. It covers four changes which have some bearing on libraries, but does not cover all matters relating to that legislation. The topics covered include: public libraries relation to the *Municipal Act, 2001;* public library board governance and municipal services boards; contracting for library service; and, new financial reporting requirements for audited financial statements.

Library boards should consult the Ministry website periodically for the latest version of the FAQ's on legislation. And certainly, if a board has a question regarding legislation, it should be directed to the Ministry for clarification or legal opinion.

Discussion: *Public Libraries Act - Questions and Answers for Public Libraries*

Review the *Public Libraries Act - Questions and Answers for Public Libraries*, either on your own or as part of a board discussion. The document is posted at
http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/libraries/act_q_a.shtml

Then consider whether these responses help you to clarify the board's responsibilities under the *Public Libraries Act*.

Role of the Board

Governance

Simply stated the role of the library board is to govern. The phrase 'governance' refers to the board's activities to oversee the purpose, plans and policies of the organization.

The Board is the legal authority of the library and is the ultimate authority for decision-making. While boards are accountable for the library's services, they are not responsible for managing the programs or the people who carry out those programs. The board's role is oversight and monitoring of the library's performance. In other words library boards are not there to run the library, but to ensure that the library is properly run.

Governing is different from managing. The governing role differs from that of administration, in that governance requires different information. It deals with the long term, rather than the short, and with priorities, rather than details. The nature of governance is proactive and focused on the future and on the relation of the organization to the community's development.

The governance of the library is achieved through the board's work in three main areas.

Area 1 - Defining the library's purpose and direction. The most important role of a board is mission stewardship. This begins with defining and articulating the library's mission and values. Providing inspiration through the expression of a vision of library service is part of the stewardship of the mission, as is defining new directions in response to changing conditions and community needs. This is achieved through the board's planning work and monitoring organizational progress towards the vision. The board makes key decisions about how best to use resources to support the mission by overseeing the financial affairs.

Area 2 - Delegating of authority to the staff to operate the library and deliver services. The Board delegates authority to the CEO to manage the day to day operations of the library. The board directs and evaluates the work of the CEO by establishing policies, budgets and plans that reflect the board's strategic directions.

Area 3 - Advocating for Library Service. The board must communicate to municipal council and the community the need for library service, report on the library's effectiveness in meeting the community's needs, and advocate for the necessary resources to deliver service.

Each of these three areas requires a closer look.

Library Board Development Kit

Area 1 - Define the purpose and direction of the library

Mission, Vision and Values – A critical part of the work of the board is to develop the mission of the library. This includes the continual review and evaluation of the mission to determine that it accurately reflects the changing needs of the community. The board also sets the vision for the library; where the library is heading and how it can anticipate the future needs of the community. The board has a responsibility for expressing a vision for library service which inspires actions but also speaks to the values of the public library.

Strategic Directions and Planning - One of the key roles of the board is to steer the library to achieve specific end results. In order to define community needs, the board must analyze and assess the library environment. This requires close and regular contact with the community. Board members must understand the cyclical nature of planning and ensure that it takes place regularly. Once community needs are identified and priorities set, budgets are determined according to these needs, certain service responses are chosen and staff develop the necessary operational plans to implement these. The board will monitor progress so the process continually moves forward.

Measure and report on results - The evaluation of the organization as a whole is dependent upon the identification of goals and objectives through a regular planning process. Achievement of these goals and objectives is determined by measuring whether the programs and activities have achieved the results intended. The board must ensure that outcomes are being measured rather than activities.

Set Policy - Policy is an important governance tool. Written policies are based on collective values of the board, staff and community, and are integral to ensuring the continuity of the library board over time. Setting policy is important board work because it is through discussing policy that the board expresses its philosophy and priorities. In working through tough issues, the board can reach decisions that provide a unified and clear message that will guide actions. For example, it is part of the board's work to decide the boundaries of governance and management. Unless there is clear direction, the board and the CEO will be confused about their respective roles.

All policies are approved at duly constituted board meetings, and are subject to regular review and revision. New board members should familiarize themselves with board policies. The board sets policy on governance functions including each of the three areas of the board's work (direction, policy development, and advocacy) and the operations of the library.

The governance policies are developed in conjunction with the foundation documents that provide the basic framework for the governance of the library board. These documents are legislation such as the *Public Libraries Act, R.S.O. 1990, chapter P.44*, the *Municipal Act*, the *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act*, and the enabling by-law enacted by the municipality to set up the library board.

Library Board Development Kit

Work of the board (continued)

Area 1 - Define the purpose and direction of the library – Set Policy (continued)

By-laws and Governance Policies

The *Public Libraries Act* provides the basis of bylaws of the library board by specifying:
- Name of the board (Section 3)
- Powers and Duties of the Board (Section 20)
- Composition of the board (Sections 9-13)
- Officers and staff (Section 14 & 15
- Meetings (Section 16)
- Authority

Bylaws are the regulations and procedures that specify board operations and governance policies regulate the work of the board. From the specifics of the *Public Libraries Act*, the library board would then create by-laws setting out the specifics of how the board is to operate.

These governance policies that provide direction could include:
- The purpose of the board
- Board Orientation
- Duties and Responsibilities of Individual Board Members
- Committees
- Policy Development
- Planning
- Financial Oversight
- Advocacy
- Evaluation of the CEO
- Board Training
- Board Evaluation
- Succession Planning
- Delegation of Authority to the CEO

Sample governance policies have been published by SOLS in *Trillium Public Library: Sample Policies* available through the 'Publication' section of the SOLS website.

Library Board Development Kit

Work of the board (continued)

Area 1 - Define the purpose and direction of the library – Set Policy (continued)

Operational Policies

Section 23(4) of the Public Libraries Act gives the board the authority to make policy on use of library services, admission to the library, exclusion of disruptive persons, imposing fines, suspension of library privileges for breaches of rules, regulation of all other matters connected with the management of the library and library property.

The board's policies should address all aspects of library services and programs. Clearly written policies express the board's beliefs, sets out roles and responsibilities, and prescribe actions. Written policy also promotes consistent, objective decisions, and stands as a consistent record to which the community may refer. While the by-laws and governance policies are often developed by the board, the operational policies are commonly developed by library staff, for approval by the board.

These are some of the operational policies of a library.
- Confidentiality & the Protection of Privacy - Policy Number: OP-01
- Safety, Security and Emergency - Policy Number: OP-2
- Accessible Customer Service - Policy Number: OP-03
- Collection Development Policy Number: OP-04
- Resource Sharing - Policy Number: OP-05
- Programming Policy - Policy Number: OP-06
- Internet Services Policy - Policy Number: OP-07
- Meeting Rooms - Policy Number: OP-08
- Community Information - Policy Number: OP-09
- Children and Teens Services - Policy Number: OP-10
- Unattended Children - Policy Number: OP-11
- Circulation - Policy Number: OP-12
- Local History - Policy Number: OP-13
- Information Services - Policy Number: OP-14

Samples of each of these operational policies have been published by SOLS in *Trillium Public Library: Sample Policies* available through the 'Publication' section of the SOLS website.

In addition to governance and operational policies, the board will require several other types of policies including some on human resources and volunteers which can also be found in the *Trillium Public Library: Sample Policies*. The library board should also understand other legislation and common law requirements as explore in Section 2. The library is a corporate entity and operates as a business, so the board needs to be aware of other legislation affecting its operations.

Work of the board (continued)

Area 2 - Delegate authority to operate the library

Another element in the work of the Board is to clearly delegate authority. Important areas under the delegation of authority are to hire a qualified CEO, to supervise the incumbent, to establish compensation and to evaluate the performance of the CEO annually.

Hire a qualified CEO - The *Public Libraries Act* requires the board to appoint a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) "who shall have general supervision over and direction of the operations of the public library and its staff, shall attend all board meetings and shall have the other powers and duties that the board assigns to him or her from time to time" Section 15 (2). The board must ensure that the library is run by a qualified CEO. There should be a policy in place that clearly shows how authority is delegated to the CEO, outlines what the board expects the CEO to achieve through the strategic goals and objectives of the library, and identifies any requirements the board may have about how the CEO is to carry out his or her responsibilities. This policy must be supported by regular review and monitoring.

Evaluate the CEO annually - The evaluation of the chief executive officer is carried out by the board, based on a careful review of organizational goals and objectives and of the CEO's adherence to the policies set by the board.

Area 3 - Advocate for library service

An understanding of advocacy is essential to working with council and with the community. Advocacy means "verbal support or argument for a cause." It covers a broad range of activities. When we recommend something, we are advocating for it. Advocacy is that aspect of governance that is about relationships. As a body appointed by the municipal or county council to provide library service to the community, the library board represents all of the community members – both those who use the library and those who do not. It is a key board responsibility to connect the library to community members and to the municipal council.

Municipal or county council, in most cases, also provides the majority of funding to the library. The board must ensure that the necessary resources are available to meet community needs. Consequently, the board must have regular and clear contact with the community and the council, and ensure that communication is two-way. The board must make certain that the community knows what the library can offer and determine the community's needs for library service. The board must then convince council of both the community's needs with respect to library service, and the potential of the library in meeting those needs. Adequate funding is the desired result of this process.

A key to advocacy is to align agendas. Council and the library board both represent the same community. It is the job of the board to find where library plans and those of council come together, and to reach agreement to work together for solutions to common issues.

Accountability of the board

Focusing on the work of governance will ensure that the board is accountable to the municipality and the community. Planning documents, budgets and policies provide detailed information about how the board's responsibilities have been carried out. These are all parts of a strong effective board.

Use resources wisely

Financial oversight is a major aspect of the board's role in ensuring accountability. The board will have to know how its assets are protected and that resources are being used wisely. It is also necessary to know in advance what data the board needs in order to prove accountability. The board must demonstrate due diligence to ensure that there are adequate controls on how money is handled, purchases made, debts settled, and employees and customers treated. Financial responsibilities is also discussed in another section of this kit.

Evaluate the board regularly

As part of being accountable, a board needs to evaluate its own performance. Part of the work of a board is to work on the board dynamics. Evaluation is the process by which the board determines if it is achieving what it should. The performance of the board is dependent upon the performance of all its members. The board is comprised of a number of individuals, but operates as a single unit. No one board member or sub-group of members has any power to act unless delegated to do so by the entire board.

John Carver, whose [Policy Governance Model]® offers a clear path to effective governance, emphasizes the importance of board self-evaluation.   He suggests that self-evaluation is part of the task of governing. Rather than thinking of evaluation as onerous, it is perhaps better considered as practicing a skill. If the board is not adept at assessing its own skills, how can it govern the skills and performance of others? For Carver, the best way, then, to determine how well you did a job is to assess whether you've done what you said you would do.

An evaluative process must speak directly to previously-set criteria (policies, goals and objectives that define what the library does and how it does it). Ideally, the full board should carry out the evaluation together. Since everyone is responsible for the success of the board, everyone is responsible for its evaluation. The board considers its own performance on a regular basis, preferably at every meeting, but at least annually.

Discussion: The role of the board and questions to consider:

1. Do all board members have a clear understanding of the board's work?
2. Has the board developed a complete framework for the library?
   - Mission? By-laws and governance policies? Operational policies?
3. Does the board have a plan for reviewing these for currency and continued appropriateness on a regular basis?
4. How is the board's meeting agenda related to, or is reflective of, the board's role?

Meeting Management

Board meetings

The *Public Libraries Act, R.S.O. 1990, chapter P.44* states that "A board shall hold regular meetings once a month for at least 10 months each year and at such other times as it considers necessary." This is a slight change as the *Act* used to specify which months of the year the board had to meet. Because it is only the entire board that has the authority to act, not individual board members, the board meeting is the most important opportunity for the board to do its work - to discuss issues, make decisions, solve problems, educate board members, plan for the future and review material submitted by staff. In this section of the *Library Board Development Kit*, we will look at various aspects of managing the board meeting including:

- Agendas
- Officers
- Committees
- Chairing effective meetings
- Rules of order
- Closed sessions and confidentiality
- Board as a unit
- Code of conduct
- Minutes
- Preparation for meetings

Agendas

It is important to plan meetings, to provide information to members so that they can be prepared to meet, and to run the meeting in such a way that the work is accomplished efficiently and effectively. The agenda is the ideal tool for meeting planning. It is more than a mere list of business items to be considered. It is an invaluable tool to focus discussion and use time productively.

Who creates the agenda? - The agenda is the plan for the board's work. The board and staff need to work together to create a workable overall meeting plan for the board's term. However, the CEO often produces the actual agenda for a specific board meeting. The CEO usually remains in place from board term to board term, but the board members may come and go. The ongoing experience of the CEO is a valuable resource for the board.

Library Board Development Kit

Agendas (continued)

How to focus board meeting agendas on board work and avoid administrative activities

- **The agenda should reflect the board's job -** The fundamental work of the board includes monitoring organizational performance and overseeing the finances. The agenda therefore should reflect this level of discussion and not the job of management. One of the features of good governance is the separation of board and management roles.

- **Minimize focus on minor items or correspondence -** Provide a 'correspondence summary' for complete copies of all correspondence with one copy of correspondence available should a board member wish to refer to it. Those items that the board does not require for monitoring or for decision-making should be clearly labeled as items that are for 'Information only'.

- **Agendas should move the board forward -** The board's work is largely strategic and directed towards the future. A best practice is to have a long-term plan to move board work from month to month. Creating an annual agenda is a useful way to ensure that the board has the time to accomplish all of the necessary tasks over the course of the year. The board should be aware when budget discussions, CEO evaluation, key community events or board recruitment must take place. The agenda should lead the board throughout its four-year term enabling it to handle both the expected and unexpected business of library governance.

- **Agendas should allow for discussion of important matters** - It is important that, as a board, you come to value time spent in genuine conversation. While it is always tempting to want decisions to be made quickly and unanimously, the reality is that the bigger the decision is, and the more complex the situation, the greater the need is for conversation before the decision. In the context of board meetings where important decisions are being made there must be time allotted for open dialogue in which everyone feels free to express their views and perspective believing that they are contributing a valid piece of the overall picture. At the same time, everyone must be willing to change their views by learning something new. It is helpful to remember that dissent and differences are good because they ensure that more ideas get discussed and more factors taken into consideration. Multiple perspectives are any group's greatest asset because they lead to a fuller exploration of options before deciding on a course of action. Collective intelligence is a newly coined term that speaks to the power of multiple perspectives. By thinking well together, a group can access greater intelligence than any individual's capacity.

- Ideally, the annual agenda should also reflect the current goals and objectives the board is seeking to achieve as part of its strategic plan. Relating the annual agenda directly to the results the board is seeking to achieve focuses board work on the future and on moving ahead. It also provides a means of tracking and evaluating its progress in meeting community needs.

Library Board Development Kit

Three types of agendas

a) Annual board plan

Developing an annual agenda plan can be an invaluable tool in steering the board's work towards accomplishing specific results.

Month	Strategic issues	Information needed	Board action	Governance	Information needed	Board action
January						
February						
Et cetera						

The **Strategic issues** column identifies the strategic or critical issues the board must consider. The issues are major in nature and may be local or span the entire library community. Discussion of these issues will eventually result in board action, policy, and service responses. Once part of the library's overall service, they will be monitored and evaluated.

The next column, **Information needed,** should contain the information the board will need to support both discussion of, and action on, strategic issues. It will come up as needed.

The **Board action** column will contain the action proposed by the board as a result of strategic issues discussion, such as a motion or policy.

The **Governance** column contains those activities the board must include on the agenda in order to fulfill its accountability obligations. For example, this column should include elements of the board's job that relate to accountability. It also includes items such as Policy development, review and revision, financial oversight, connections with council and the community, monitoring and evaluation, committee work such as CEO appraisal, facility planning or recruitment.

The next column, **Information needed,** should contain those reports and monitoring documents the board will need to review at any particular meeting.

The **Board action** column will contain the action proposed by the board as a result of governance discussions.

Library Board Development Kit

Agendas (continued)

Three types of agendas (continued)

b) Annotated agenda

Monthly agendas should give board members a clear idea of how to prepare for the meeting. An annotated agenda will provide information not just about the item to be discussed, but also what materials board members should read prior or bring to the meeting. A good agenda will also include an estimate of how long board members might expect to spend on particular items. The Board Chairperson and CEO will also have a more detailed agenda with notes relating to facilitation of the meeting.

c) Consent agenda

The consent agenda is a helpful device that public sector boards use to handle agenda items that don't require a great deal of discussion. Typically, a consent agenda facilitates passing a number of items with one single motion without discussion. However, the request of a single board member can move an item on to the regular agenda. Library boards use the consent agenda to dispense with lengthy discussions on information items or reports.

Officers

a) Chair and Vice-chair

The *Public Libraries Act*, Section 14(3) requires that the board elect one of its members as chair at its first meeting in a new term. Section 14(4) goes on to state that in the absence of the chair, the board may appoint one of its members as acting chair.

The function of the chair is to act in a leadership role to the board, ensuring that business is dealt with expeditiously, and also to help the board work as a team. It is the chair's responsibility to be the presiding officer at board meetings and to act as an official representative of the library. The chair's term may be set out in the board's by-laws.

As the presiding officer, the chairperson must look after both the content and the process of the meeting. The 'process' element of a meeting deals with how agenda items are discussed, the style of interaction, group dynamics, and climate. It is the chair's responsibility to ensure that this aspect is managed effectively at every meeting.

The chair has the same rights and responsibilities as other members of the board. In addition, the chairperson can vote on all questions (Section 16 (6)), and a tie is deemed to be negative. The chairperson also has additional powers to call special meetings and may expel any person for improper conduct at a meeting under section 16 (3).

Library Board Development Kit

Officers (continued)

b) Secretary and Treasurer

Section 15(3) of the *Public Libraries Act* requires the board to "appoint a secretary who shall, a) conduct the board's official correspondence; and b) keep minutes of every meeting of the board". The secretary's duty of keeping minutes also includes preparation of the agenda in cooperation with the chairperson and distribution of all reports and enclosures with the agenda (board package).

In Section 15(4), the *Act* further requires the board to "appoint a treasurer who shall, a) receive and account for all the board's money; b) open an account or accounts in the name of the board in a chartered bank, trust company or credit union approved by the board; c) deposit all money received on the board's behalf to the credit of that account or accounts; and d) disburse the money as the board directs".

In Section 15(5), the *Public Libraries Act* also states that, "the same person may be both the secretary and the treasurer, and the chief executive officer appointed under subsection (2) may be the secretary and may be the treasurer". Some library boards also appoint a 'recording secretary' for the express purpose of taking minutes at the meeting, and sometimes have a secretary for board business, as well as the recording secretary for board meetings.

c) Chief Executive Officer

The chief executive officer (CEO) is the person appointed by the board to administer the operation of the library. Generally, public library boards designate their senior staff member in the library as CEO and also appoint the CEO to be both treasurer and secretary of the board. The primary reason for this arrangement is that a staff member has the time and resources needed to deal with the extensive and demanding workload required of a CEO, as well as the responsibilities of the secretary/treasurer. Since all records related to the board's activities must be housed in the library, this staff member is conveniently situated near these records.

Committees

Many boards use committees to assist the board in the job of governance. It should be noted that a committee's task should be part of the work of the board, rather than the work of the staff. Committees should be time-limited and have a specific purpose, much like a task force, although many boards use standing committees, such as 'Personnel' or 'Finance' that do work outside of board meetings and report back to the full board.

The major drawback in using committees is that they can interfere with the integrity of the board and can cause confusion for the CEO or staff members with respect to which 'body' has authority. This is especially true of an executive committee, which can place the board's authority in the hands of a few members. Consequently, many boards prefer to work as a 'committee of the whole', that is, the entire board undivided by committees.

Chairing meetings

Chairing a meeting means ensuring that a meeting achieves its aims. A library board meeting has been called for a specific purpose and all discussion at the meeting must be steered to this end. This may sound simple in theory but in practice it is a very demanding task. In this section, a series of helpful actions for the meeting chairperson are noted:

Be the chair – assert the board's independence from management matters, manage board dynamics

Lead the board to effective governance
- focus on the fundamental work of the board
- monitor organizational performance, risks and opportunities
- oversee financial affairs

Lead to define own job –develop its own work plan
- goals and objectives and focus on planning, policy and advocacy
- determine strategic objectives and what success looks like

Lead the board to characterize authority – enforce duty of loyalty, define expectations of behaviour regarding attendance, preparation, and participation

Lead the board to evaluate performance – at each meeting, and over the course of the year
- how time is spent at meetings
- progress towards objectives
- decision-making and implementation

Take responsibility for the agenda – reflect governance, not operations

Run an effective meeting – encourage discussion, facilitate participation, include everyone, define problems, test for assumptions and understanding, summarize progress, respect people's time and commitment

Rules of order

Rules of order set out procedures for running meetings. These rules are essential to ensure that every trustee at the meeting has been heard and has had an opportunity to vote on all issues. The use of standard rules simplifies and expedites the business of the meeting.

The board may wish to adopt, as its official guide, one of the rules of order, such as Roberts, Bourinot, or Kerr and King. All of these rules of order describe formal meeting process, including how to present motions, conduct debate and vote on issues, as well as nominations and elections.

Closed meetings and confidentiality

Section 16.1 of the *Public Libraries Act* discusses the issue of open and closed meetings with respect to a library board meeting. Clearly, all library board meetings are open to the public unless the confidential nature of the business items under discussion requires that the meeting be closed.

"Meetings" is defined in s. 16.1(1) to include any regular, special, committee or "other meeting of the board". One example of this type of special meeting would be a strategic planning meeting, and it follows that a public library board meeting focusing on strategic planning would need to be open to the public.

The board can take measures to conduct the different types of meetings, including strategic planning meetings, to be in compliance with the *Act* and to meet any local sound practices or accountability measures. For example, information about the meeting and its focus or agenda can be advertised and posted as a board meeting and that the meeting will be open to the public.

The location of all types of library board meetings should be identified which is particularly important as strategic planning meetings may be at a location other than the library itself. Information about these additional meetings should be provided in the public board packages including the dates, time and location and purpose for board input. Minutes should be taken at all public board meetings, and minuted notes from those sessions should be included in subsequent public board packages.

Under Section 16.1(6) of the *Act*, if a board intends to hold a closed meeting, before the board holds the public meeting, it shall state by resolution the fact that the board is holding a closed meeting and the general nature of the matter to be considered at the closed meeting such as a personnel matter or litigation. Remember that only those stipulations under Section 16.1 (4) can be used as reasons to hold a closed meeting.   Once held, it is important for board members to respect the confidential nature of items discussed in closed meetings.

Acting only as a unit

The individual trustee sitting on a board does not act alone or on behalf of the board unless specifically given the authority by the whole board to do so. It is the board that is the legal entity. In most cases, it is the board chair who speaks on behalf of the board as a whole.

Individuals serving as library board trustees must endorse the mission of the library and care about the library. Board members should think of this as an ethical responsibility. These ethical responsibilities are in addition to the legal responsibilities we have just touched on and the ones that we are about to consider.

Library Board Development Kit

Preparation for meetings

It is the board member's obligation to comply with the notion of 'duty of care' as part of his or her fiduciary responsibility. There is an expectation to arrive on time and to be prepared for board meetings. This indicates how serious you are about accountability and respect for the process. In order for board members to prepare properly, meeting information should be circulated to everyone well in advance of the meeting, and should include meeting objectives and agenda, location/date/time, background information, and assigned reading or documents for preparation.

Meetings should begin and finish on time. Attendance is extremely important as board members are responsible for what happens at board meetings, even if they are not in attendance. Attendance at meetings is not only a responsibility, but also a protection for board members under the duty of care.

Conflict of Interest and Code of conduct

A code of conduct is a useful tool to deal with important issues regarding the board's conduct. A code of conduct covers many issues that regularly affect boards. While legislation often exists governing how boards must deal with certain issues, others are left to individual boards to manage. Discussing how to handle certain issues prepares the board for action, rather than rendering it incapable if a serious issue arises. The code of conduct is an expression by a board of its agreement to conduct business in a particular way. It is a commitment to carrying out its job with decorum.

A code of conduct sets out how the board will handle issues, such as conflict of interest, confidentiality, and limits on board member's actions. Conflict of interest is a major concern. The _Municipal Conflict of Interest Act_ governs library boards and the notion of 'duty of loyalty' from the Corporations Act. This legislation prevents board members from using their positions to obtain personal benefit from the organization for themselves or family members.   Duty of loyalty asks board members to act honestly and in good faith in the best interest of the library. This is of particular interest to council representatives who often feel they must argue for the interests of council. When they are at a library board meeting, they must be loyal to the interests of the library.

Issues not covered by legislation are less clear. For example, individual board members cannot exercise authority over the organization unless explicitly set forth in board policies. Interaction with the public, press or other entities must recognize the same limitation and the similar inability of any board member or board members to speak for the board. This requires a firm commitment from the board to make decisions carefully and to speak with one voice. But if concerns are fully discussed in a board meeting and all board members have participated in a balanced debate the final decision will be made by the board as a whole.

The article, "15 Ground Rules for Nonprofit Staff & Board Meetings" could be a helpful resource to assist in productive meetings (from http://bloomerang.co/blog/15-ground-rules-for-nonprofit-staff-board-meetings/)

Library Board Development Kit

Minutes

Minutes are the permanent record of the proceedings of a board or committee meeting. The Public Libraries Act, Section 20(e), establishes that the board shall, "...ensure that full and correct minutes are kept".

Minutes should not record every single comment, but should note the general meaning of the discussion in enough detail to provide an accurate review of what occurred. The agenda provides the skeleton of items to be included in the minutes of the meeting. The minutes constitute a legal record of the proceedings and are considered public documents. Minutes are prepared by the secretary and should include the following:

- the date, time, place of meeting, regular or special meeting, name of board or committee
- the heading, "Minutes"
- a list of the members present and absent
- the name of the chairperson
- the status of previous minutes
- all motions, movers, seconders and results of votes, for example:

Moved by (name) that the minutes of the meeting of March 10, 2014
Seconded by (name)
Be approved.
Carried

- motion numbers for ease of reference, for example:
  2013:30 (The year and sequential number for each motion, beginning each year)
- a list of reports and documents discussed at the meeting
- a summary of significant points raised in debate; problems, suggestions and opposing points of view
- any commitments to undertake tasks made by the board or the CEO
- time of adjournment

Library Board Development Kit

Discussion: Checklist to evaluate your meetings

Checklist to evaluate your meetings

Consider reviewing meeting effectiveness at the end of each meeting, with suggested improvements applied to the next meeting. It may be useful to focus on different aspects at each meeting. Using a simple checklist can assist the board in continually improving the quality of board meetings. A sample is provided here.

Meeting evaluation	Yes	No	How To improve
1. Was the agenda comprised of board issues?			
2. Did the board try to delve into staff level issues?			
3. How did the board handle information items?			
4. Did all board members attend the meeting?			
5. Did board discussion allow for diverse viewpoints?			
6. Was the board able to reach collective decisions after appropriate discussion?			
7. Did board members participate fully in discussions?			
8. Did board members all take responsibility for keeping discussion to board issues and on topic?			
9. Did board members offer their individual expertise and receive the expert input of other members?			
10. Were board members able to point out when others deviated from current policy?			
11. Did board members attempt to represent the board without authorization?			
12. Did board members attempt to exert individual authority over the CEO/staff?			

Financial Oversight

Financial role of the board

The board's financial responsibilities are clearly outlined in the *Public Libraries Act*. In its accountability to the municipal council, the province, and the people it represents, the board undertakes to guarantee that the allotted funds are spent to best meet the needs of the community, and are in accordance with the budget. This accountability means more than simple bookkeeping. Once council has approved the budget, the board must scrutinize the financial operations of the library.

Scrutiny by the board means reviewing financial reports to ensure that the financial affairs of the library are being well-managed. Financial oversight involves:
- Understanding the implications of a budget and financial report;
- Recognizing if the allocation of monies aligns with board priorities;
- Ensuring that financial policies are in place to control receiving, processing and disbursing money, to ensure fiscally sound budgeting, to comply with current municipal legislation with respect to purchasing and hiring, to manage risk, and to limit liability.
  (From Cut to the Chase, a publication of the Ontario Library Boards Association, posted at
  http://accessola.com/olba/pdf/cut_to_the_chase.pdf)

The board monitors the finances of the library, and allows the CEO to manage the day to day operations once the budget is set. The board role is to see that the library is well-managed by constantly being alert to community needs, securing adequate funding and ensuring that the expenditure of library funds fulfils the library's stated goals and objectives. Oversight of the finances does require rigour; simple approval of a budget or a financial report, approving a cheque register, or challenging a budget line is not enough. The board is still the ultimate decision maker with fiduciary responsibility.

Board treasurer

The *Public Libraries Act* states that the board must appoint a treasurer. Many public library boards in Ontario appoint the CEO as Treasurer and Secretary of the board because the CEO, as manager and administrator, is the person most likely to be aware of the day-to-day finances.

Library Board Development Kit

Financial role of the Board

Board Treasurer (continued)

Section 15 (4) of the *Public Libraries Act* outlines these duties for the Treasurer:

> **"Treasurer**
> (4) A board shall appoint a treasurer who shall,
> (a) receive and account for all the board's money;
> (b) open an account or accounts in the name of the board in a chartered bank, trust company or credit union approved by the board;
> (c) deposit all money received on the board's behalf to the credit of that account or accounts; and
> (d) disburse the money as the board directs."

The actual procedures for handling of the library board's money vary from board to board. Some library boards handle their accounts completely, where others have the municipality look after payroll on their behalf. In some libraries, the library board has entered into an agreement with the municipality or county headquarters to handle some financial functions.

The Ministry has addressed this issue in its *Questions and Answers* document, which states:

> **30. May a library provide for such administrative functions as payroll, by entering into an agreement with its municipality?**
> Yes. A number of library boards and their municipalities already carry out administrative functions in this way. However, where such administrative financial agreements exist, directions regarding the disbursement of library funds remain the prerogative of the library board.

It is important to recognize that this arrangement can be extremely beneficial, but there are a few points with respect to the agreement that should remain clear. The board still must appoint a treasurer, as outlined in the *Public Libraries Act*, and have a separate bank account. Monies must be distributed as the board directs.

Financial accountability to council

One of the three major responsibilities of a library board under the *Public Libraries Act* is to be accountable to the municipal/county/band council. This accountability falls into two main areas:
- Seek council's approval for real property and raising funds through debentures.
- Budget estimates and the audit (covered later in this section of the *Kit*)

Library Board Development Kit

Financial accountability to council (continued)

Real Property and Debentures

One of the areas that this accountability falls into is to seek council's approval for real property and raising funds through debentures. Under the *Act*, libraries can raise money through debentures. Section 25 covers this issue:

Debentures for library purposes

25. (1) - The sums required by a public library board or union board for the purposes of acquiring land, for building, erecting or altering a building or for acquiring books and other things required for a newly established library may, on the application of the board, be raised by the issue of municipal debentures.

Under the *Act*, libraries are allowed to hold real property. Section 19 covers this issue.

Real property

19. (1) A board may, with the consent of the appointing council or, where it is a union board, the consent of a majority of the councils of the municipalities for which it was established,

(a) acquire land required for its purposes by purchase, lease, expropriation or otherwise;

(b) erect, add to or alter buildings;

(c) acquire or erect a building larger than is required for library purposes, and lease any surplus part of the building; and

(d) sell, lease or otherwise dispose of any land or building that is no longer required for the board's purposes.

Budget process and the library board

The budget process is an important part of the library board's activities. The budget process is a year-round activity involving a series of stages. Before the budget process is finalized for one year, work already should have begun on the next year's budget. The development of a budget is part of the board's financial responsibilities, as is the monitoring of the financial reports through the year. Submitting budget estimates to the council is part of the financial accountability to council. Fortunately, the cyclical nature of the budget process allows new board members to "jump in" quite easily.

Library Board Development Kit

The Cyclical Nature of the Budget Process
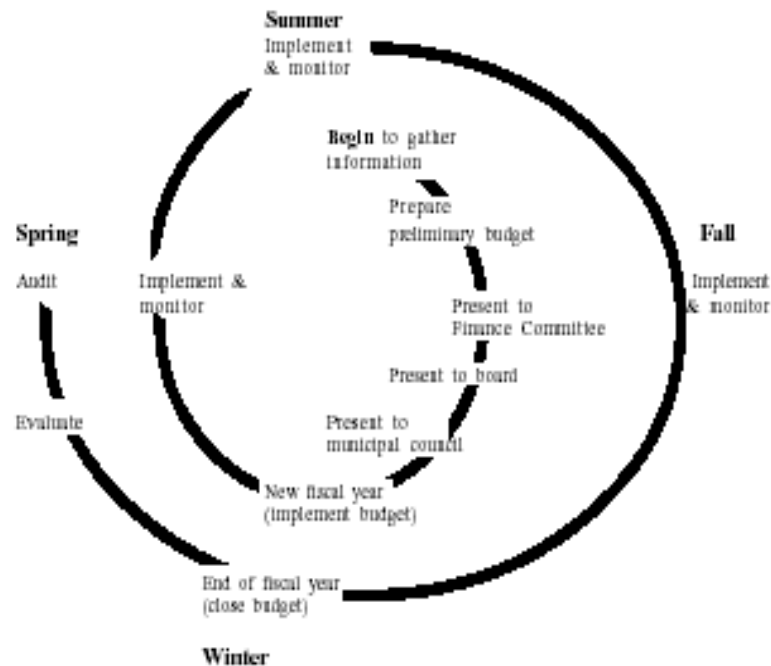
Budget estimates to council

While some funding for a public library in Ontario comes from the province through the Public Library Operating Grant program, in most libraries, the bulk of the operating funds come from the municipal or county council. The *Public Libraries Act, R.S.O. 1990, chapter P.44* outlines the relationship between the library board and the municipal council with respect to the presentation of a budget for the public library.   The budget is called "estimates" and as outlined Section 24 of the *Act* , must be submitted to council in a format set by council on or before a date specified by council.

Section 24 outlines the following process for submitting estimates to council:

Estimates

24. (1) A public library board, county library board or county library co-operative board shall submit to the appointing council, annually on or before the date and in the form specified by the council, estimates of all sums required during the year for the purposes of the board.

Approval of estimates

(2) The amount of the board's estimates that is approved or amended and approved by the council shall be adopted by the board and shall be paid to the board out of the money appropriated for it.

Idem

(3) The board shall apply the money paid to it under subsection (2) in accordance with the estimates as approved, subject to subsection (4).

Budget process and the library board (continued)

Section 24 - Council may authorize variation

(4) The council may, in its approval of the board's estimates or at any time at the board's request, authorize the board to apply a specified amount or percentage of the money paid to it under subsection (2) otherwise than in accordance with the items of the estimates as approved.

And for the few union library boards left in Ontario, there are two extra sections:

Idem: union board

(5) A union board shall submit its estimates to each of the councils of the municipalities for which the board was established, and subsections (1), (2), (3) and (4) apply to the union board with necessary modifications.

Where two or more municipalities concerned

(6) A union board shall submit with its estimates a statement as to the proportion of the estimates that is to be charged to each of the municipalities, and if the estimates of the board are approved or amended and approved by the councils of the municipalities representing more than one-half of the population of the area for which the board was established, they are binding on all the municipalities.

Once again, the Ministry has used the ***Questions and Answers*** document to address this issue. The Q & A document states:

32. What is the library estimates or budget process?

Library boards submit estimates to their appointing council or councils annually. The estimates are submitted in the form required by the council or councils and they must include all amounts required during the year for the purposes of the board. If there is more than one appointing council the estimates are required to include a statement on the proportion of the estimates to be charged to each of the municipalities. Council may, in the approval of the board's estimates or at any time at the board's request, authorize the board to apply a specified amount or percentage of the money paid to it otherwise than in accordance with the estimates as approved.

From the *Act*, the council may ask for changes to the estimates presented by the library board, for example, to change a specific line to reflect a certain amount. It is recommended that libraries and library boards build relationships with the municipality, county representatives and council which results in less scrutiny of the library estimates, leaving financial responsibility for the library service to the appointed library board, within the framework of the *Act*.

Following approval of the estimates, the library board adopts the budget as their own. At that point, the spending authority rests with the library board. While there are references to variances, in most cases in normal circumstances, once the budget has been approved, Council has no further say on the library budget. Council must pay the amounts specified in the budget to the board, at the times and using agreed-upon procedures.

Library Board Development Kit

Financial monitoring

The experienced board member views the monitoring phase of the budget process as vital in achieving responsible governance of library affairs. The tools most frequently used by library boards to ensure accountability are a) monthly financial reports and b) the audit.

a)Monthly financial reports for the board

By reviewing and approving regular financial reports, the board not only fulfils its legal requirements and avoids being taken by surprise, but also, and perhaps more importantly, tracks the progress towards achieving established goals and objectives. The monthly financial report compares the amount of money actually spent and received with the projected targets set in the budget. It should give a current, accurate and up-to-date picture of library finances. Careful review of the monthly reports will alert the board to discrepancies before they become major problems.

- **Knowing what questions to ask -** The monthly financial report should prompt a number of questions from board members. The board should require thorough answers to gain a clear understanding of the implications of these answers. However, questions surrounding the monthly financial report should not draw the board into the day-to-day operations of the library. Boards should not be involved in discussions over what titles are purchased, or other specific amounts in the budget. On the other hand, they would want to question the expenditure of 95% of the annual book budget in the first month of the fiscal year. Asking appropriate questions relating to the library's finances is crucial to oversight and accountability. The major concern of the board should be whether the money expended allows the library to achieve its stated goals and objectives, and provide the services that meet the needs of the community.

- **What should the monthly financial report look like? -** Presented at each regular board meeting, the monthly financial report should give a current accounting of expenditures to date, as well as a comparison of expenditures with the overall annual budget. The report should follow the structure and categories of the budget, and list in separate columns, the current month's revenues and expenditures, those for the year to date, and the budgeted amounts for the year. Some libraries suggest that a comparison be made with the previous year, while others include a column indicating the percentage of the budget spent to date. A variance column may also be included to indicate if a certain line item is over or under-spent. The sample is included as a reference point, and is not meant to be definitive.

Library Board Development Kit

Sample Monthly Financial Report

	June	Year-to-date	2014 Budget
Revenue			
Municipal operating grant	0	20,000	29,764
Provincial operating grant	0	0	8,782
Provincial pay equity funding	0	0	2,000
Self-generated revenue	50	670	1000
Donations	100	100	150
Total operating revenue	**150**	**21,795**	**42,762**
Project grants program	0	0	0
Summer Experience student	1200	1,200	0
Total special grants	**0**	**1,200**	**0**
TOTAL REVENUE	**1,350**	**22,995**	**42,762**
Expenditures			
Salaries, wages & benefits	2,127	12,762	25,522
Staff training	0	0	0
Materials - General	1,200	5,000	8,000
Materials - Electronic	0	0	0
Facilities/Utilities			
Insurance	1,300	1,300	1,300
Utilities	200	900	1,800
Maintenance and repairs	800	800	1,000
Equipment and furnishings	1,200	1,200	1,400
Telecommunications			
Telephone and fax	60	360	720
Internet connectivity costs	0	0	0
Computer services	1,100	2,200	1,100
Other: Audit	0	700	700
Other:Cataloguing and processing	100	300	400
Other:Postage and freight	50	100	250
Other:Advertising	50	90	150
Other:Memberships	120	120	120
Other:Miscellaneous	100	100	300
Total operating expenses	8,407	25,932	42,762
Project grants program	0	0	**0**
Summer Experience student	0	1,200	**0**
Total special grants	**0**	**1,200**	**0**
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	**8,407**	**27,132**	**42,762**

Financial monitoring
b)Annual audit

By law, the books of a corporation must be audited annually. An audit is an examination of financial records to determine their accuracy, and verified by an independent professional accountant. Usually an auditor carefully looks over the journals, compares the entries with the cancelled cheques and receipts, and performs several other checks to test the accuracy of the financial records.

Library Board Development Kit

An audit is a straightforward process if the library has kept its records honestly and accurately. In preparing for an audit, the treasurer should make sure that he or she has gathered together all of the financial records for the period being audited. It is standard during an audit that the treasurer be asked for explanations for expenditures or revenue and for documentation (cancelled cheques, receipts, and bills) to substantiate expenditures. In general, the library should benefit from an audit since it will then have an independent statement as to the accuracy of the financial records.

The auditor makes an official report which includes an annual financial statement for the library, outlining the library's financial position at the year's end. This report should be distributed to all board members and municipal councillors, and copies should be kept on file by the CEO.

There are several notes about the audit, for example, that the annual audit of the public library board accounts and transactions must be carried out by an auditor appointed under the *Municipal Act, 2001*, section 296 and that it is acceptable for a library board to supply its financial information in a consolidated audited financial statement with that of the municipality, provided that the financial information on the library board is clearly identified.

The Ministry has addressed these two stipulations in its *Questions and Answers* document, which states the following:

> **33. Who conducts the library audit?**
> The *Municipal Act, 2001*, section 296 requires municipalities to appoint an auditor licensed under the *Public Accountancy Act* to annually audit the accounts and transactions of the municipality and its local boards and to express an opinion on the financial statements of these bodies based on the audit. Please see the *Municipal Act, 2001*, for more detailed information on the municipal auditor. The *Public Libraries Act* subsection 24(7) requires that the auditor appointed under the *Municipal Act, 2001*, section 296 conduct the library audit.
>
> **34. May the library audit be included in the municipal audit?**
> Both public library boards and First Nation Bands, Local Services Boards and municipalities that contract for library service, receive library funding under *PLA* s. 30. It is a condition of *PLA* Regulation 976 1(b) that recipients of library funding under *PLA* s. 30 supply the audited financial statements and information to the Minister that are required under s. 37 of that Act. It is acceptable for a library board to supply its financial information in a consolidated audited financial statement as noted in *Municipal Act, 2001*, s. 296 (11), provided that the financial information on the library board is identified. One way to do this would be in a separate schedule or appendix of the consolidated municipal financial statement

It is also a condition of *Public Libraries Act* Regulation 976 1(b) that recipients of library funding, under *Public Libraries Act* section 30, supply financial information to the Minister. In the past, all libraries had to supply a copy of their audited financial statements. In 2010, this condition was altered according to the level of government support, so that only those receiving more than $100,000 are always required to supply the Audited Financial Statement.

Library Board Development Kit

Financial policies

There are a number of issues that should guide the CEO with participation from board members on the finance or audit committee with respect to the library's finances. These should be clearly stated in policy.

Policies should be in place to govern how the Board intends to protect the actual, ongoing financial position of the library. One key area to consider is whether spending exceeds the amount of money received to date. Is there enough money to pay staff and bills? Are all deductions for tax and required filings done on time and accurately? Are there adequate controls on spending and purchasing processes? Is the CEO's spending limit realistic for the size of the budget?

Financial policies should also provide guidelines for annual budget planning. Key among these guidelines is that the budget should reflect the library's priorities and should not present an unrealistic expectation of funds. In other words, the library should be able to afford what it wants to do. By the same token, the library should not always be satisfied with the status quo. There must be enough money in the budget for adequate staff to do the work of the organization, and for staff training, as well as for board items, such as fiscal audit, legal fees, board meetings and board development.

- **Procurement policies required in 2005**

According to Section 271 (1) of the *Municipal Act*, a local board had to adopt policies with respect to its procurement of goods and services before January 1, 2005.

These include:
- policies with respect to the types of procurement processes that shall be used, the goals to be achieved by using each type of procurement process;
- the circumstances under which each type of procurement process shall be used;
- the circumstances under which a tendering process is not required;
- the circumstances under which in-house bids will be encouraged as part of a tendering process;
- how the integrity of each procurement process will be maintained; how the interests of the municipality or local board, as the case may be, the public and persons participating in a procurement process will be protected;
- how and when the procurement processes will be reviewed to evaluate their effectiveness; and,
- any other prescribed matter.

Sample policies were developed by the Ontario Library Service and are posted under Financial Control and Oversight in the Professional Information A-Z web page run jointly by SOLS and OLS-North.

Library Board Development Kit

Discussion: How does the budget process operate in your library?

Using this table, discuss financial monitoring and the budget cycle in your library.

Deadline	Activity	Action by
Monthly (Implementation)	Promote library to council and the community	Library board
Monthly (Implementation)	Monitor financial reports	Library board and CEO
6 months prior (Planning)	Review library goals and objectives	Library board and CEO
3 months prior (Planning)	Consider programs for the coming year in consultation with senior library staff	Chief Executive Officer
3 months prior (Planning)	Estimate potential revenue	Chief Executive Officer
3 months prior (Planning)	Review municipal budgeting guidelines and timetable for budget preparation	Chief Executive Officer
3 months prior (Preparation)	Recommend percentage adjustment in salaries	Personnel committee or appropriate library board representatives
2 months prior (Preparation)	Prepare the initial draft of the operating and capital budgets, present draft budget to Finance committee or appropriate representatives of the library board	Chief Executive Officer
1 – 2 months prior (Preparation)	Revise initial draft of the budget as necessary	Chief Executive Officer and Finance committee
1 month prior (Preparation)	Present draft budget to library board for approval Approve budget for presentation to council	Finance committee Chairperson Library board
1 month prior (Preparation)	Discuss budget with municipal staff	Chief Executive Officer
1 month prior (Preparation)	Lobby individual council members regarding budget concerns	Individual library board members as assigned
2 – 3 weeks prior (Presentation)	Plan strategy for budget presentation	Library board Chief Executive Officer
2 weeks prior (Presentation)	Ensure all documentation to be used in budget presentation is in place	Library board Chief Executive Officer
Budget meeting with council (Presentation)	Present library budget	Library board

This model schedule is adapted from *Trustee 20/20 #2: **The board and the budget: Presenting the budget to council***, a publication which is posted on the SOLS website.

Key Relationships – the board, the CEO and municipal council

A vital component of effective library service is the strong relationship between the library board, the CEO and the municipal council. A summary of the roles of the board and the CEO was presented in Section 4 of this kit. The accountability aspects of the relationship between the library board and municipality were covered under the Financial Control section of this kit.

These important relationships merit deeper examination to ensure the roles and responsibilities are clearly understood and delineated. First, we will look at the relationship between the board and CEO and then the board and municipal council.

The board and the CEO

The relationship between the board and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is a partnership. In an effective library organization, the board and the CEO work as a team to provide library service which meets the community's needs. Occasionally, this alliance encounters problems, most often rooted in a basic misunderstanding of each other's roles.

Library boards monitor organizational performance while CEOs are in charge of the day-to-day operations of the library. The surest way to avoid difficulties before they begin is to clearly delineate the roles that the CEO and the board play in the overall operations. Once these are understood, it is easier to respect each other's contributions and begin to work toward mutual goals.

In 1992, this topic was covered in an issue of *Trustee Tips* called "A library built on cooperation: the board's relationship with the CEO".   From that time, the relationship between the library board and CEO remains similar.

Key responsibility areas

The Board's key areas of responsibility, according to the PLA, are:
- Develop and approve policy and planning;
- Advocate for the library; and,
- Hire a CEO and evaluate his/her performance.

Library Board Development Kit

Other areas of work for the board can include: developing and approving the mission, vision, values and strategic directions; monitoring organizational performance; overseeing the financial affairs of the library; and assessing risks and opportunities.

While the board may devote a great deal of time and effort to the development of policies and plans for the library, it is ultimately the CEO who will have the responsibility for ensuring that those policies and plans are realized. Arguably, the board's single, most important task is to appoint a CEO. It is so important that the Ontario library legislation devotes a specific section 15 (2) to CEO appointment and a description of the CEO's duties.

CEO's key responsibility areas	
Advise the Board	**Administer the library**
- make clear recommendations to board - provide the board with all of the information it needs (both good and bad news) - give advance warning of difficult situations whenever possible so that the board is never taken by surprise - develop a close working relationship with the board chair - support the board - draft budget and official reports - act as Secretary/Treasurer, if appointed as such by the board (See section 15 (from 2 to 5) of the **Public Libraries Act**.	- direct day-to-day operations of the library, including all branches - ensure that all board policies and directives are carried out - supervise the delivery of programs and services - supervise and evaluate staff - ensure that the budget is expended as approved by the board

The relationship between the board and the CEO should be one of mutual respect, trust, support and inspiration. The board provides oversight and fiduciary responsibility. The CEO, in turn, provides the expertise in library science to run the library operations.

The chart on the following pages is adapted from *The Ontario Library Trustees' Handbook*, Ontario Library Association, Toronto, 1999 and the *Cut to the Chase* document of the Ontario Library Boards Association (OLBA), and provides an overview of roles and responsibilities for board and CEO.

Library Board Development Kit

	Library board roles and responsibilities	*CEO roles and responsibilities*
Legal responsibilities	• Knows local and provincial laws; responds to new legislation affecting libraries • Ensures that complete and accurate records are kept by the library • Is legally responsible for the library to the council	• Knows local and provincial laws; responds to new legislation affecting libraries • Keeps complete and accurate records concerning financing, personnel, inventory, insurance and annual report • Is legally responsible to the library board
Board meetings	• Attends and participates in all regular and special board meetings	• Reports at each board meeting and attends at all times except when *own performance or salary are to be discussed*
Planning	• Assesses the library needs of the community • Sets the mission and overall direction of the library in response to the needs of the community • Approves and participates in the development of the library's goals and objectives • Approves the plan for meeting the library's goals and objectives	• Assists the board to know community needs and to carry out formal assessment when required • Analyzes library strengths and weaknesses • Participates in developing the library's goals and objectives • Formulates a plan for meeting the library's goals and objectives • Recommends programs and activities
Policy making	• Determines policies for the library after careful analysis of the Chief Executive Officer's recommendations • Evaluates the performance of the Library annually or more often, considering budget vis-à-vis service rendered, library use, personnel and public relations	• Recommends policies needed, advises board, and supplies examples and sources of information • Establishes procedures for implementing policies • Interprets policies and procedures to staff and public • Administers the library to conform to established goals

Library Board Development Kit

The board and the CEO (continued)
Overview of roles and responsibilities for board and CEO (continued)

	Library board roles and responsibilities	*CEO roles and responsibilities*
Personnel	• Hires the Chief Executive Officer • May approve and review senior level staff recommended by Chief Executive Officer • Approves salary scales for all staff • Ensures that appropriate steps are taken to handle any grievances that have not been satisfactorily resolved • Evaluates the CEO's performance annually	• Hires and directs subordinate staff members, adhering to board policies • Negotiates salary scales and working conditions for staff • Handles all grievances and keeps the board informed • Ensures that annual performance appraisals are conducted on all staff under the CEO's supervision

Financial matters	• Analyzes preliminary budget request submitted by the CEO; makes necessary changes
	
	• Explores all ways of increasing library's income through new sources; determines method to be used
	
	• Officially adopts budget and prepares the budget for presentation to municipal council
	
	• Presents the budget at the municipal council and committee meetings (may vary with size of the library and level of integration with municipality.)
	
	• Ensures that proper financial control measures are in place to expend the budget:
	  • with due diligence
	  • according to board priorities
	  • as approved by council
		• Prepares preliminary budget in conjunction with the Board or its committee based upon present and anticipated needs, considering the Board's plan for growth
		
		• Liaises with municipal treasurer/CAO and other municipal staff regarding the budget
		
		• Participates in budget presentation, supplying facts and figures, analysis and comment as requested
		
		• Maintains and monitors the budget and attends to problem areas when they arise

Library Board Development Kit

	Library board roles and responsibilities	*CEO roles and responsibilities*
Community relations	• Advocates the library's services in the community • Advocates the community's needs with the library • Develops a strong and communicative relationship with the municipal council	• Maintains an active program of public relations including promoting library services in the community
As a rule of thumb: *Library boards see that libraries are properly run but do not run them.* *Library boards see that libraries are well managed but do not manage them.*		

The board and municipal council

The library board is often referred to as a bridge between the library and council. To build a strong relationship with council, the board must go beyond simple awareness of community needs. It is essential to this relationship that the board has its finger on the pulse of the community. This means proactive outreach to both the council and to the community. The board must ensure that council is aware of the library's potential and the impact the library can have on the community. There must be consistent and continual two-way communication.

Not unlike the relationship between the board and the CEO, the relationship with municipal or county council also depends upon accountability, cooperation, mutual understanding of roles, communication and knowledge of each other's priorities and directions.

Because the library board is accountable to council financially, the board needs to be well-prepared for their interactions with council. This means having good, clear back-up material when advocating to council for library funding. It also means approaching council at other times - not just when asking for money or assistance. Build the relationship initially on sharing information as partners serving the same community with similar goals in mind.

Building a good relationship with council depends on open and frequent communication. It is important to foster cooperation, because both the board and council represent the same interests. While the library board is an independent, separate body, it is important to look for ways to align agendas with the municipality. The board must be aware of council's plans and demonstrate how the library fits within those plans. The library is an integral part of the community - it is the board's job to ensure council understands the library's part in it.

Library Board Development Kit

The board and municipal council (continued)

It is essential for library boards to forge a link with community leaders, including the Mayor, council members and other elected officials. The Chair should focus on developing a relationship with the Mayor or Reeve, while other board members target members of council and other elected officials, such as school board trustees. For county libraries, this will mean building relationships with lower tier officials, as well.

Knowing council's needs and directions and being well-prepared for meetings with council are obviously important. A best practice would be to develop a schedule of meetings with council, rather than approaching only when the library needs money; it could help take the board-council relationship to a more effective level. Both parties must know and respect each other's roles. Positioning the library as a solution to municipal issues rather than a drag on tax dollars is important. Working together to find ways for the library and the municipality to share approaches on an issue is far superior to only accentuating the distinctiveness of the two entities.

Advocacy is critical to working with council

The library board is responsible for ensuring that the community is aware of the importance and potential of the library, and that municipal council understands the importance of the library and its impact on the community. Library advocacy is a major board responsibility. Advocacy may be described as verbal support or argument for a cause. It covers a broad range of activities. Whenever the library board encourages support of the library's mission, values and beliefs, it is advocating for the library. This differs from public relations or marketing because the focus is on the library, not on supporting a specific program or promoting a product.

Advocacy is a primary role for library board members because they have a statutory responsibility to govern the library and a moral responsibility to better service and advance the library cause. To do this, they must know how the library works, what it offers, and truly represent library interests to legislators and funders. They must promote the library mission within the community, keep track of government legislation, communicate the implications of upcoming policy and legislation to government officials, and take part in clarifying and resolving library-related issues.

The existence of public library legislation at the provincial level is an indication that library service is already considered by the lawmakers to be very important. It may be necessary to make a stronger case at the municipal level. "Quality of life" facilities, such as libraries, in a community are assuming increased importance and the competition for funds is becoming tougher each year. The board may need to sharpen its advocacy skills just to stay in the running for municipal funding.

Library Board Development Kit

The board and municipal council (continued)

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Lobbying

Lobbying is a specific type of advocacy which seeks to influence government bodies in their decision-making. Two varieties of lobbying are recognized: grass roots lobbying and direct lobbying.

Grass Roots Lobbying attempts to affect legislation by influencing the opinions of part or all of the general population. For example, an arts organization might launch a campaign urging the community to demand a review of a proposed by-law which would cut financial support to cultural organizations.

Direct Lobbying tries to influence legislation by direct contact with someone involved in preparing it.

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When Should Trustees Advocate?

Whenever the library is talked about, attention is drawn to it.   Tell friends about your work as a trustee and encourage them to use the library. Use your enthusiasm to promote the library and communicate library needs clearly and strongly to selected targets. Use your influence on council well and utilize your council reps to help present issues to council. Success in advocacy depends on accurate effective messages reaching the right targets.

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Library Advocacy Now! - This is a program developed by the Canadian Library Association and a team of trustees, vendors and librarians to train more effective spokespersons and advocates for all types of libraries. More information on the program is posted at www.cla.ca.

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Group dynamics and board communications

The importance of communication in relationships

Earlier sections of this kit touched on some key components of communication within the board, and this is very important when the board considers its key relationships with the library CEO and with the municipal/county council and staff. For example, there was a discussion on using a "Code of Conduct" as a method of setting ground rules for how a board might interact and a discussion about the concept of "speaking with one voice" and the importance of a decision-making process to assist the board in making objective decisions.

Library Board Development Kit

Group dynamics and board communications (continued)

It is also important to consider that basic communication skills are pre-requisite to any effective relationship. Board members need to know how to talk and discuss issues with each other, the CEO and staff, the council and the community. Boards must know how to create a clear message and distribute it so that it can be understood.

Plan how to communicate important information

A communications plan could be an effective tool for the library board. The plan would outline a course of action when boards make decisions and have information to share. It is important to handle communications in a logical and efficient manner, taking care to ensure the message is clear, that it is sent or delivered to the right target, that the most effective format or formats is/are chosen and that the message is delivered in a timely fashion.

Key communication skills

- **Foster dialogue instead of debate**

  Discussing issues and trying to reach decisions can be a challenge at times. It is important to recognize that there must be differences of opinion in order to foster good dialogue and reach decisions. The board must be able to make decisions from a divergent base and seek out and listen to many viewpoints so that the final choice satisfactorily solves the problem, or handles it in a way that appeals to the greatest number of voices.

  It helps to consider the differences between dialogue and debate. **Debate** tends to focus on one "right" resolution, and often fails to lead to a conclusion supported by the majority. Debate is often adversarial. One participant pits himself against another, attempting to find flaws in the opponent's position and focusing on defending his own assumptions as the truth. Debate tends to criticize the adversary's position and force others to accept one's own position. **Dialogue**, on the other hand, is more geared to building a solution. Dialogue recognizes that all participants can have a piece of the truth. There is an attempt to work together to explore commonalities and gain mutual understanding. Participants are more prone to listen to find points of agreement, and assumptions are discussed and evaluated. Dialogue seeks a new and better answer to a problem.

- **Practice effective listening**

  We can listen to others in a variety of ways. We can listen with the intent of finding fault with what the other person is saying. We can listen in an interested but passive way, assuming that we have understood what we have heard correctly.

  Effective listening engenders better communication by allowing others to be heard and acknowledged. It may help others to spot weaknesses in their own arguments when they are heard without criticism. It can also help to point out areas of agreement or bring more hidden issues to the surface to be dealt with openly.

Library Board Development Kit

Discussion: Building a relationship with municipal council

Answer the questions in the left-hand column to help you strengthen your board's relationship with municipal council.

Questions about your relationship with council	Comments/Action
What materials will you need to prepare or acquire prior to meetings with council?	
How can you make a clear case to council on future library development?	
How will council members on the board be used to further the relationship with council?	
How will you involve council in library activities, events and celebrations?	
How can you become aware of council's needs and agenda?	
What actions can you take to keep council informed and, hopefully, on side?	
What obvious opportunities for cooperation are there with council?	
How will you prepare for the annual budget presentation to council?	

At the end of the first year of the term, try completing this section of the chart. Re-visit the chart regularly to determine if your relationship with council is getting stronger.

Describe the board's current relationship with council	Strengths	Weaknesses
➢ Does the board meet with council regularly or only at budget time?		
➢ Does the board remain abreast of council concerns and issues? ➢ Is council aware of library board issues?	Opportunities	Challenges

Planning

Part of the fundamental work of the board includes approving strategic directions and assessing organizational risks and opportunities. Both of these activities require the board to be forward looking and able to plan for the future.

Planning is essential to focused and effective library service. It is the collective work of engaging in big picture thinking that clarifies the library's purpose and future direction and ties day-to-day practicalities to the big picture. Board members offer an important outside perspective to planning discussions yet they also have an intimate knowledge of the library. The added value of the board as community representatives is balancing their perspective with library standards in planning discussions and decision-making.   A good deal of board planning discussion is assessing how the library has performed in the past, what is happening currently, and what will affect the library in the coming months and years. The board will determine how the library will progress and the rate of that progress in order to achieve its mission.

What is planning?

Planning is a process of investigation and research, discussion and decision-making, implementation and evaluation. Planning ensures that the library is serving the community and responding to its needs. Its role can incorporate cultural, recreational, informational and educational services to all members of the community. Planning moves the library from a reactive stance to an active one, determining and shaping its own future.

Planning answers the following questions:
- What is the purpose of the library?
- What is the library environment (or community)?
- What are the needs of the community?
- What roles should the library play?
- How do we assess progress?

Library Board Development Kit

The planning process

In 2007, SOLS set out a planning process in a publication called Creating the Future You've Imagined: A Guide to Essential Planning. It is a framework that provides for the alignment between fundamental decisions about identity and direction, and everyday decisions affecting service and the use of resources. The diagram below sets out the stages in the essential planning process.
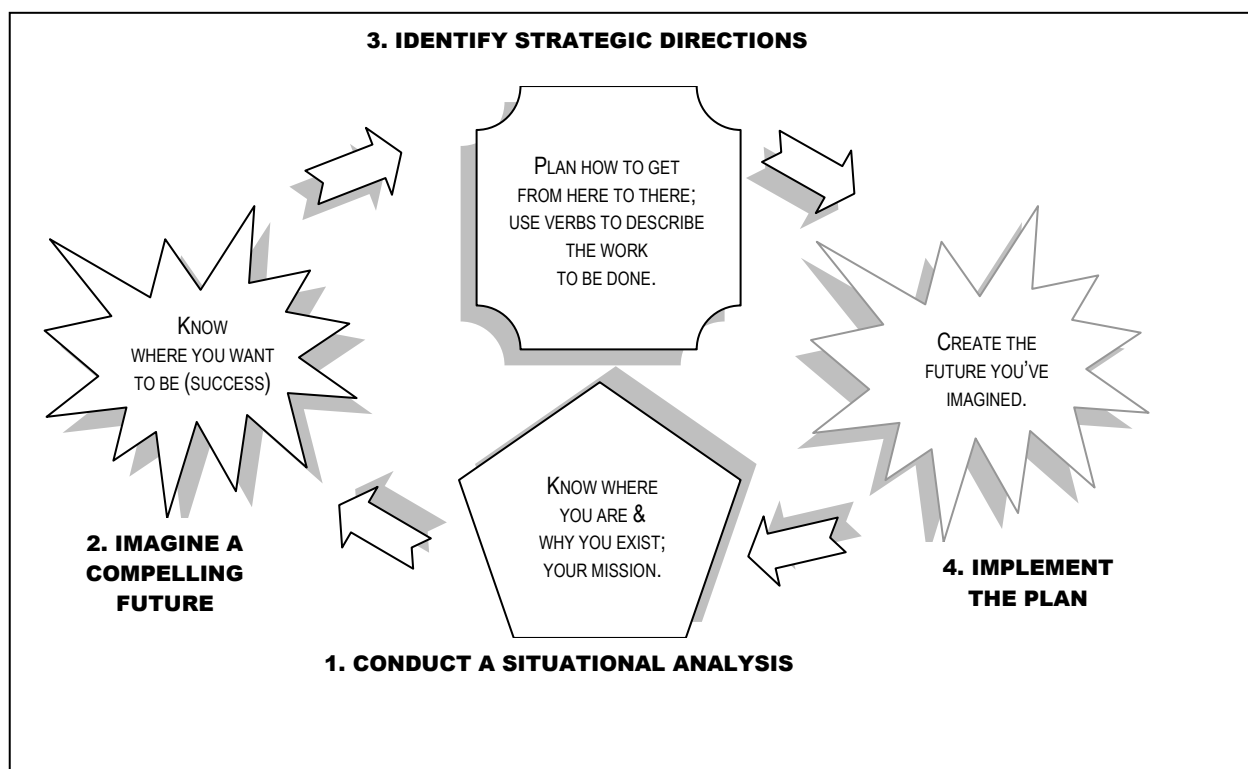
The board's role in the planning process

Because the board is accountable for the affairs of the library, and is the bridge between the library and the community, the board is involved in planning. The board's role, first and foremost, is to ensure that planning takes place.

For a library, a strategic plan is generally described as a systematic process by which the library formulates achievable objectives or goals for future growth and development over a period of years, based on its mission and on an assessment of the resources (both human and material) which are available to implement the plan. A well-developed *strategic plan* can serve as the foundation for effective performance evaluation of the CEO. A strategic plan, covering several years, can provide the basis for annual operating plans.

Library Board Development Kit

The board's role in the planning process (continued)

Planning is an important board role because it:

- ensures that the board, staff and community understand why the library is there and what value it is trying to achieve;
- investigates the needs of the community, promotes discussion of options and ensures that the library responds to new client needs without unnecessary duplication of services available elsewhere in the community;
- sets measurable goals and objectives that ensures evaluation;
- ensures continuity of services, regardless of changes in personnel, be it among board, staff or council members;
- encourages long term commitment to quality library services;
- aligns the resources of the library with stated priorities and ensures efficiencies;
- assesses risk of future plans and the potential burden on current resources;
- ensures the library's ability to respond to changing needs and emerging trends in the community; and,
- affirms to council that library funds are being spent in a transparent, deliberate and responsible manner.

The board engages in big picture thinking in order to come to a shared understanding of the purpose of the library. This is articulated in a mission statement. The board also has the responsibility to set the future direction for the library. This work is accomplished through the development of a vision which describes what the successful library will be in the future. Setting the goals and objectives of library service in the community follows the visioning process. Establishing priorities among the identified goals and objectives is part of the board role, since the board is responsible for ensuring that funding is adequate to achieve the stated goals and objectives.

Although it is unlikely that the board would be involved in all the stages of the planning process, unless the library is a small one, there are points in the process where board involvement is necessary. They are:

- mission and vision statement;
- selecting the service priorities;
- overall goals and objectives;
- setting and approving the policies required to support the plan;
- identifying the indicators to be used to evaluate if goals and objectives are met; and,
- monitoring progress and reporting on it to the community.

Library Board Development Kit

The Importance of strategic thinking

When community members come to a library board, they come with many skills.   It is particularly important that board members are able to consider the big picture and think strategically.

Strategic thinking is a manner of thinking that seeks to move the library forward to meet emerging needs in the community, while confirming that the activity of the library remains consistent with its purpose. Key aspects of this type of thinking are ongoing assessment of environmental factors, risks and opportunities, coupled with continuous questioning that the work of the library matters and reflects its mission, vision and values. To think in this manner, the board must also have a solid understanding of the community the library serves and bring diverse voices to the board table.

So it is the board's thinking, combined with the library-specific expertise of the CEO and staff that is so significant. The board must have the capacity to govern the board from a strategic perspective all the time.

Selected planning tools

There are a few publications that are specifically written for public libraries which are highlighted here to assist boards in planning for library service.

Creating the Future You've Imagined: A Guide to Essential Planning. Library Development Guide # 3. Southern Ontario Library Service. 2007**.**

This publication outlines SOLS' approach to the planning process, an approach that highlights the need for board and staff to enter into strategic conversation as the best way to arrive at a collective understanding of the library's essence, where it is right now, where it should be, and what it needs to do to get from here to there. Essential Planning is a scale-able planning approach that can be made appropriate for the small town library, the county library with geographically dispersed rural branches, and the thriving urban library system. It recognizes that planning is an essential board and staff responsibility, but also recognizes that it represents work that is in addition to the ongoing governance and operational work required for the provision of library service. The Essential Planning approach was designed to be a manageable, plausible undertaking so that all boards and staff will choose to engage in the essential work of planning for library service.

One copy of this Guide was distributed to every public library in Ontario at no cost in 2007. To purchase additional copies, please use this order form.

Library Board Development Kit

Selected planning tools (continued)

Ontario Public Library Guidelines

The Ontario Public Library Guidelines program was developed by the Ontario public library community to help improve the quality of public library service across the province. The *OPL Guidelines* offer a method for public libraries to comprehensively assess governance, management, resources and services. Generally, the guidelines set requirements for a library to have basic policies in place, to evaluate services and needs and develop plans for service development. There is less of an emphasis on quantitative measures of service.   With the assessment completed libraries can develop work plans to address those areas where they fail to meet basic levels.

Participation in the *OPL Guidelines* program is voluntary. The *OPL Guidelines* are useful at several levels, and depending on its state of preparedness, the library may request an internal assessment or a formal audit in order to receive accreditation status from the Ontario Public Library Guidelines Monitoring and Accreditation Council.

Why is accreditation good for your library? There are several points to consider.

1. **Evaluation of local service** - The guidelines facilitate an organized, objective approach to the evaluation of local library service. They ensure that your evaluation process is fair and comprehensive. Rather than concentrating unduly on strengths or weaknesses, the guidelines give direction to, and assistance with, a review of the whole spectrum of services and operations.

2. **Planning** - By using the guidelines, you will gain an understanding of those matters which require attention, and those which can be considered to be appropriately developed. With this assessment in place, you are able to consider appropriate directions for development of library services, and incorporate them into your annual plan.

3. **Accountability to taxpayers** - Accreditation indicates to taxpayers that their library is meeting province wide standards and using public money effectively and responsibly. There are demonstrable performance measures to indicate the value and quality of library service in the community.

4. **Funding** - The guidelines, and the plans developed as a result of their application, will assist your board by providing the justification for securing municipal and other funding to implement the plans. Accreditation will help to make the case for adequate local support by showing that the library is a good place for the municipality to put its money.

5. **Consistent service across the province** - A library which undertakes accreditation will play a leadership role in raising the level of public library service across the province. When you implement the guidelines, you encourage neighbouring libraries to do the same, and everyone benefits from the enhanced service.

Selected planning tools (continued)

Ontario Public Library Guidelines (continued)

OPL Guidelines accreditation is a way for the library community to recognize the achievements of its peers and colleagues. A library interested in the accreditation process should notify the Guidelines Council.

The purpose of the Guidelines Council is to monitor the continuing effectiveness of the *OPL Guidelines* and make revisions as required; arrange for peer audits by request; and bestow the special designation of "Accredited Ontario Public Library" on those public libraries that successfully complete the *OPL Guidelines* process.

Depending upon location, staff from OLS-North or SOLS can help with the initial work on the *OPL Guidelines*. They will meet to fully explain the program and to do a preliminary review of programs, services and governance, and help put together a plan for meeting the requirements. Staff will assemble an audit team to visit the library. The audit team will contact the library to arrange an appropriate date and time to meet. The library will be invoiced for an audit fee to cover the cost of materials and auditors' expenses. Accredited libraries receive a certificate which is valid for five years and a package of information to help advertise its accredited status.

To find out more about the *Guidelines* program, please contact a member of the OPL Guidelines Council or visit the website at http://www.ontariopubliclibraryguidelines.ca/.   The staff representative on the Council from OLS-North is Steven Kraus who can be reached at skraus@olsn.ca or 1-800-461-6348 ext 228, and from SOLS, the staff representative is Peggy Malcolm (pmalcolm@sols.org or 1-866-380-9767).

The Library's Contribution to Your Community: A resource manual for libraries to document their social and economic contribution to the local community

Public libraries have long been aware of the positive contribution they make to the life of the community, but have had difficulty in demonstrating it persuasively to municipal politicians and administrators. This manual was produced to assist public libraries in documenting the benefits of the library in ways which speak directly to municipal stakeholders. Approximately 20 municipal politicians and administrators were polled by the consultants who produced the manual, and they indicated that they needed to see organized evidence of clearly identified benefits in the local context.

The manual is designed for self-use by public libraries. Individuals can choose how to use the manual at a level of involvement comfortable for their library. It identifies thirteen social and nine economic benefits which a public library may provide, and indicates how to collect and analyze evidence that the library delivers these benefits to the community.

Library Board Development Kit

Selected planning tools (continued)

The Library's Contribution to Your Community

Impacts	Category	Benefit measures
Social/ Personal	Personal growth/ Development	• Information services for personal decisions • Lifelong learning •·Search for employment • Use of leisure time • Reading readiness for pre-school children • Multicultural services
	Community development	• Social interaction/Sense of community • Satisfaction with the community as a place to live • Community awareness
	Support to community groups/agencies	•· Information services • Other services • Support for Individuals in the education system
Economic	Direct economic impact	• Employment • Purchase of goods and services
	Support to local business/ Investors	• Information services to local business • Information services to personal investors • New business development
	Indirect Economic Impact	• Industrial/Commercial attraction • Support for the retail sector • Enhanced property value • Marketing and promotional information in support of local business

The manual provides tools for collecting the information needed, including five different surveys. Also in the manual is a communication strategy for constructing the argument and preparing for counter-arguments, and a means to deliver your message to municipal politicians and administrators. One copy of the manual was distributed to each public library in Ontario, and training and assistance in its use is available from Southern Ontario Library Service. The second edition was published in 2007. Copies can be ordered online here .

Discussion questions: Planning

With respect to planning, consider these two questions
1. Review your library's current planning process. Do the goals, objectives and activities or actions in the planning document clearly relate to the library's vision, mission and values?
2. How does your library board handle planning? Is planning done on an annual basis or is there a three– or five-year planning process? Does the board discuss factors and issues that might have an impact in the future on a regular basis?

Policy

Policy development is fundamental to the work of the board. Policy provides structure; both for how the library will accomplish its priorities, and how the board itself functions. Policy arises out of the collective values and beliefs of the board, staff, and community about library service.

As the board is a permanent entity - one that continues to exist as a unit after individual board members have left or CEOs have come and gone - a crucial role of the board is providing continuity of governance for the library and ensuring consistent library service over time. The board does this by developing policies in written form that have been approved at a formal board meeting and will be reviewed and revised, if necessary, at regular intervals.

Policies are the framework which assist the library board in conducting its own business and guides the library staff in making day-to-day decisions. They grow out of and give definition to the library's mission, and provide for consistent operational procedures. The public library board uses policy to set out what needs to be done, determine who will do it, and how it is to be done. It is a key ingredient to the successful operation of the library and one of the board's most important functions.

Policies and procedures are not the same thing. Policies are formal statements of a principle or rule. Implementation of policies requires clearly written procedures. Procedures are detailed and specific instructions concerning particular operations. While policies determine the 'what' of library operations, procedures determine the 'how to'. Boards make policies and library staff establish procedures to implement these policies.

Types of Policy

There are various approaches and terms used to categorize the different types of policies that a library needs. Four types of documents are presented here.

1. **Foundation policies** are statements that articulate the library's purpose. The foundation policies set the context for library decisions and articulate the library's vision, mission and values. These guiding principles could be in the form of incorporation documents.

Types of policies (continued)

2. **Bylaws** are the legislative requirements that govern the library. Almost all bylaws have their basis in the *Public Libraries Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. P44* and should be developed with reference to the *Act*. The *Public Libraries Act* provides the basis of bylaws of the library board by specifying:
   • Name of the board (Section 3)
   • Powers and Duties of the Board (Section 20)
   • Composition of the board (Section 9 to 13)
   • Officers and staff (Section 14 & 15)
   • Meetings (Section 16)
   • Authority (Section 20)

3. **Governance Policies** regulate the business of the board. They focus on how the board defines its roles and responsibilities. They are not as closely derived from the *Act* as are bylaws. The board should have governance policies that provide direction and elaborate on:
   • Purpose of the board
   • Board Orientation
   • Duties and Responsibilities of Individual Board Members
   • Committees
   • Policy Development
   • Planning
   • Financial Oversight
   • Advocacy
   • Evaluation of the CEO
   • Board Training
   • Board Evaluation
   • Succession Planning
   • Delegation of Authority to the CEO

4. **Operational Policies** outline the means to achieve the board's mission and goals. They direct the actions of the CEO and staff. They are in place to ensure excellence in work performance, appropriate behavior, service development and attention to risks. Section 23(4) of the *Public Libraries Act* gives the board the authority to make policy on the use of library services, admission to the library, exclusion of disruptive persons, imposing fines, suspension of library privileges for breaches of rules, regulation of all other matters connected with the management of the library and library property. Note that the wording of the *Act* is "may" which means that the board may make policies if it wishes. Thorough operational policies should address all aspects of library services and programs.

Sample by-laws, governance and operational policies have been published by the Southern Ontario Library Service in a publication called *Trillium Public Library: Sample Policies* which is posted in the 'Publications' section of the SOLS website.

Library Board Development Kit

Written policy preserves continuity

Written policies require a lot of time to formulate, establish, implement and evaluate; the reward far outweighs the effort spent in developing them. Written policies are the greatest contribution the board makes towards continuity. They:

- reflect current standards of good governance and legislative requirements;

- ensure that the board clearly expresses its values and expectations about library service in its community;

- ensure that the board makes decisions objectively and not reactively;

- provide assurance that decisions are not made expediently or on personal grounds;

- provide transparency and information to the community about the library;

- ensure consistency in making decisions;

- reduce the number of decisions that must be made independently, thereby saving time and money;

- define roles and responsibilities for decision-making;

- control activities so that the board is confident that its wishes are being carried out;

- provide a measure of legal protection; and,

- give clear direction to staff.

The board's role in developing policy

Policy development is the responsibility of the library board. This work is best accomplished by the board creating an annual work plan that sets out a schedule of policies that will be reviewed. Since the board represents the community, the board defines the values and beliefs that underlie the policy. In other words, the board's contribution to drafting policy is, at the broadest level, setting out the guiding principles to which all further policies must adhere. Policies must be approved at a duly called and constituted board meeting. The board as a whole is the only body authorized to approve policies on behalf of the library.

An essential element of these policies is that they reflect the values and principles of the library, as well as any specific provisions. This is needed so that the board and staff of the library understand the motivation of the policy and can act accordingly in determining implementation methods. It also focuses Board discussion on an area where trustees, as representatives of the community, have special competence. An example would be a policy that sets the target value for the extra non-resident fee paid by people from outside the municipality as being equal to the average taxes collected per household for library service.

Library Board Development Kit

The staff role in developing policy

It will most likely be the CEO who identifies the need to develop new policies relating to library operations. The CEO often researches sample policies and frequently drafts an initial version of policies. Other staff may have a role in researching and writing policy. In fact, in many cases the writing of policy is a collaborative effort by both board and staff, with each partner offering his or her particular experience and/or expertise. The board needs to rely on the input of staff in order to develop operational policy because the staff has training and professional expertise in the library field. Staff assists in policy development, but approval is the board's job. Further work on procedures that flow from these approved policies is usually left to the staff to complete, since they are involved in the day-to-day operations of the library.

Steps to developing policy

How does a board create policy? The process of writing policy can be daunting, but there is a systematic approach to the task.

The first step is determining the need for a policy. This entails the philosophical discussion phase in which the board grapples with the various points of views on the issue under consideration. The board must allow enough time for open discussion, listen to all sides of the issues, debate, identify the board's collective belief, as well as the desired outcome of the policy. In this step, the board will define the basic principles of the policy and the desired result of the policy. The board must also be mindful that the policy should support the mission and priorities of the library. For example, as a basis for a discussion on Internet access policy, the board would consider its commitment to the principle of Intellectual freedom, upon which public libraries are built, and debate the many points of view that individual board members bring to the discussion. From this discussion, the board clarifies the belief that will underlie the policy. The initial statement in a policy often makes reference to this belief.

In the next step, the board develops the policy content; the statements arising from its beliefs and values that will indicate what should be done about the issue. To which situations will the policy apply? What are the parameters for action? What impact will this policy have on existing policies? What are the potential legal and operational implications of the proposed policy? By considering these questions, the board can define the regulations that would be required to achieve that purpose.

The third step involves drafting out the specific sections of the policy, including the purpose, scope, responsibilities, effective date and approval date.

Following the review process, the board will adopt the policy at its next board meeting. The approved policy will then be communicated throughout the library and added to the policy manual.

Library Board Development Kit

Consensus: key in developing policy

Public library boards represent a diverse group of people that reflects the entire community. Boards have to be able to deal with difficult, complex issues and develop the skills to reach policy decisions and speak with one voice.

The true strength of a board comes from its ability to make decisions from a very diverse base. It's critical for boards to think about how to make decisions and how to handle disagreement. In order to make decisions that are in the best interests of the library, the board must seek out and listen to many viewpoints, so that the final choice satisfactorily solves the problem or handles the issue in way that appeals to greatest number of voices.

The board must have a sound course of action in place to handle the discussion and reach a suitable conclusion. Boards must learn how to come to grips with disagreement in the boardroom, as it is an essential component of healthy debate.

One approach to developing a decision-making process is to break it down into a series of steps[1]. These steps include: defining the decision to be made; gathering information to help to understand the problem; identifying and consulting with key stakeholders to understand the effect of a decision upon them; and, proposing alternatives to be considered. In considering the alternatives, it is important to consider both the immediate impact and consequences of each alternative, and the impact and consequences over time.

The process then involves applying "criteria for decision-making."[2] These criteria bring the board's current values, policies and beliefs to bear upon the decision in a logical way. The board would reflect on which option would provide the most possible benefit for the most people, how each option aligns with current policies, laws and principles of library service, and the relative costs of each option.

This type of process can help a board to make a sound decision, deal with inevitable disagreement and keep as many parties satisfied as possible. Good governance implies that all board members must agree on all issues. However, speaking with one voice is a concept that is easy to imagine but much harder to achieve. Healthy debate is needed for boards to make informed decisions. But good governance necessitates that all members agree that any decision that is made using a fair process becomes the position of the whole board.

Those on both sides of a debate need to understand that, with a fair process, all board members must support the integrity of the process and the final outcome.

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[1] Such a process is described in *The policy governance fieldbook: Practical lessons, tips, and tools from the experiences of real-world boards*, Caroline Oliver, general editor, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999, pp 124-5.
[2] Ibid, p. 124.

Library Board Development Kit

The policy manual

Once developed and approved, the policies should be published for reference by the board, staff and the public. Each policy should be recorded on a separate page. Policies should be stored in a designated policy binder or manual for convenient access by staff and board members. In addition to the actual library policies, the policy manual should also contain:

- *Public Libraries Act, R.S.O. 1990, chapter P.44* and Regulation 976;

- Municipal or county by-laws affecting the library, including the by-law which established library service; and,

- The library plan (strategic plan, mission statement, goals and objectives, etc.).

Using this type of policy binder easily facilitates regular review and revision of policies by allowing the addition of both new and/or revised policy statements to replace outdated versions. All approved policies should be available to the public and posted on the library's website.

Once the policy statement is written, staff and board can collaborate on written procedures. After this stage, the whole document can be reviewed by key parties such as managers and employees that will be responsible for implementation. It is useful to seek input from those who will be affected by the policy to test its soundness prior to formal adoption. For example, the board might wish to test how a potentially controversial policy might be received by staff and patrons.

Review policies regularly and revise them as necessary

Once the board has invested the time to develop policy, it is important to conduct regular reviews. One need only think of the rapid expansion of information technology to realize that the policies governing access to materials that were appropriate a few years ago may be inadequate today.

The key in policy review is to determine whether or not the policy has been useful for the purpose it was intended to serve. The board should explore whether the policy has been effective in the situations for which it was developed. Reports from staff and reactions from the public will indicate the level of effectiveness. Specific challenges against the policy will suggest whether the policy is perceived as being too severe or too lenient. It will also be important to consider how the environment in which the policy was originally created has changed, and what alterations should be made to the policy in light of such change. In certain cases few if any changes may be necessary. In other cases, a major policy revision may be required.

Library Board Development Kit

Discussion: Policy checklist

The [Ontario Public Library Guidelines](#) set out the best practice for governance, management and development of public libraries in Ontario. They are developed, monitored and revised by the Ontario Public Library Guidelines Monitoring and Accreditation Council, a broadly-based group, representative of the Ontario public library community. The Guidelines provide a voluntary process designed to assess the state of operations and development of a public library and enable it to attain and maintain consistently strong levels of service. The guidelines may be used either for internal purposes as a board and CEO evaluation tool or in a purposeful process to achieve accreditation through a formal audit.

In the 6th edition of the *Ontario Public Library Guidelines* there are 166 statements. These include statements about planning document, evaluation processes and policies. All statements related to policies within the Guidelines are deemed to be mandatory – and a library cannot be accredited under the Guidelines if it fails to have one of the mandatory statements.

This table provides a list of policies that appear in the Guideline statements. Board should begin a review of policies by taking an inventory of their by-laws and governance policies. The table can be used as a checklist.

Policies in the Ontario Public Library Guidelines 6th Edition	Policy Status	
	Have	**Don't Have**
1.1.7 - Board Bylaws (which should include these clauses)		
Governing Body (appointments to the Board)		
Officers & Committees		
Meetings		
Board Finances		
Amendment of Bylaws		
Duties and Responsibilities of the board		
1.3.1 - Planning Policy		
1.5.1 - Advocacy Policy		
3.1.1 - Personnel Policy (which should include these clauses)		
Responsibility for Personnel Issues		
The hiring process		
Hours of Work		
Salaries, Wages and Benefits		
Holidays, Vacations and leave		
Performance Evaluation		
Resignations and Dismissal		
Retirement		
Personnel Records		

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Policies in the Ontario Public Library Guidelines 6th Edition	Policy Status	
	Have	**Don't Have**
3.2.2 - Collection Policy (which should include these clauses)		
Responsibility for Collection Development and Selection		
Selection Criteria		
Weeding		
Disposition of Gifts		
Intellectual Freedom		
Organization of the Collection		
Complaints about the Collection		
3.4.1 - Safety, Security and Emergencies Policy (general)		
3.4.5 - Working Alone Policy		
3.4.7 – Workplace Violence Policy (also a legislative requirement)		
3.4.8 – Harassment Policy (also a legislative requirement)		
3.5.1 – Privacy and Access to Personal Information Policy		
4.2.3 - Circulation Policy (which should cover these clauses)		
Borrowing Policy		
Loan Periods		
Overdues, Renewals and Reserves		
Lost or Damaged Materials		
Circulation Records		
4.3.2 - Reference and Information Policy		
4.5.1 - Children's Services Policy		
4.6.1 – Young Adults' Policy		
4.8.2 - Programming Policy		
4.9.1 - Community Information Policy		
4.10.1 - Local History Policy		
4.11.1 - Public Meeting Room Policy		
5.1.3 - Resource Sharing Policy		
5.2.3 - Volunteers Policy		
6.1.1 – Public Access and Use of Computers Policy		
6.1.2 – Acceptable Use of Equipment, Software and Networks Policy		
6.1.4 – Staff Use of Technology Policy		

The library board and the community

In this section, we will look at the library board and the community, as well as in the larger library community.

The library board is the link between the library and the community and the library and the municipal council. The board's role is critical to the success of the library; without this connection planning may be ineffective, resources may be jeopardized and the library may not reach its full potential.

The *Public Libraries Act, RSO 1990, chapter P.44* directs library boards to provide comprehensive and efficient public library service that reflects the community's unique needs (Section 20a). In order to do this, the board must know those needs. Part of this knowledge comes from regular needs assessment surveys; however, there's more to it. A regular schedule of meetings with the community helps the board to become aware of community issues, to share information about library mission, to develop liaisons, and to enrich the board's understanding of the diversity of interests and opinions in the community. It is important to link with the organizations and groups that share the library's mission and users. It is equally important that the library board have open dialogue with its municipal council so that there is continual communication regarding civic issues and priorities.

It is important for library boards to consider:
- Do we think about how we represent our community and stakeholders?
- How often do we make a point of examining those relationships? Is it on our agenda?
- How can the board make regular connections a habit by building them into the board's plan for the year?
- Does the library's mission integrate with the municipality's priorities?

Library Board Development Kit

Why should boards focus on the relationship with the community?

Part of the board's work is to understand and monitor its environment and external trends that may affect the library's program and services. Each board member, as representatives of the community, brings his or her knowledge of the community to board issues and discussions. John Carver's Policy Governance® model identifies linkage with the ownership as a critical job for a governing board. In a public library, the ownership is the community. There is a variety of reasons for library boards to reach out to the community it represents to create this connection and several techniques to achieve the linkage.

- Without regular contact with the community, how can the board collect enough information to make sound decisions on library issues and priorities? Surveys are not the only techniques available to boards to establish contact with the public. The board might also consider focus groups, town halls or special community meetings.

- Sharing information with the community about what is going on at the library is an important step in building a relationship with the community. While staff typically takes a lead role in disseminating such information, the board can play a role, too. Moving the board meetings from branch to branch is a simple way to facilitate the relationship with the people who use a library's branches, ensuring that the community understands that board meetings are open to the public. It is easier for people to attend a board meeting in their own branch and people will realize that the board is concerned about local issues.

- Regular informal contact with the community keeps the board advised on the needs, concerns and opportunities of the community as they are developing. A great deal can happen in a community between scheduled needs assessments. Rapid growth, demographic shifts, or increases in ethnic populations, can put considerable stress on library programming. A board with a strong relationship with the community is better able to adapt to changing needs and opportunities.

- Another key reason to connect with both council and the community is the environment of stricter accountability. The public expects to know that tax dollars have been spent in a responsible manner and that control processes are transparent. Current public library legislation requires public library boards to report annually to the province and to the council. Is the board in the habit of making a similar report to the community? An annual report is an ideal tool to advise the community of what has been achieved by the library for the community over the past year.

- Identifying one board meeting as the annual general meeting presents another opportunity to advise the community of what the library has accomplished.

Why should boards focus on the relationship with the community? (continued)

The library can take any of these opportunities to educate the community and council on recent trends in public libraries and its potential for impacting local communities. In many communities, the library is assuming the role of a community centre, offering space for local groups to meet, as a creation space, and offering a wide variety of activities for all ages. Technology will also play an increasingly important role in community life of the future adding enormous potential in the library's role as an information clearinghouse. In addition to being attentive to the needs of the community, boards can lead their communities by introducing new opportunities afforded by technology through high-speed internet access, wifi and electronic collections.

Community Development

It is vital that libraries are 'at the table' when decisions about the community are made. By participating in community groups and in discussions about planned programs and services, library boards, either through trustees or staff involvement, are better able to decide where the library can make the most community impact. At the same time, the community will view the library as an active and valuable community partner. (From Ontario Library Service-North's 'Community Development resources which are posted at www.olsn.ca)

Libraries come to the table with a wealth of assets: free community space, technology resources, connections to the local economy, a sense of ownership by the community and, above all, a level of community trust. With these assets, the library can connect to all parts of a community, building those relationships and networks that contribute to strong social infrastructure. The library is an important community engagement catalyst.
   (From: *The Engaged Library: Chicago Stories of Community Building*, Urban Library Council 2005)

What is community development?

Library staff and trustees sometimes confuse community development with community outreach. The difference, while subtle, lies in their distinct focus. Whereas the focus of community outreach is typically that of providing library service outside of the library building and reaching out to target audiences who would benefit from library service, community development focuses on the community's advancement and well being. Put another way:

- community outreach is about the library achieving its potential by reaching out to community;
- community development is about the community achieving its potential by working together to solve its own problems and build a successful future.

Library Board Development Kit

Community Development (continued)

There are many definitions of community development but the basic concept was stated by the United Nations in 1948:

> "*Community development is a process designed to create conditions of economic and social progress for the whole community with its active participation and fullest possible reliance upon the community's initiative.*"

Community development is a process that involves the community working together in building a sustainable future and includes a variety of activities that build a stronger and more effective community. According to [Ken Haycock](#), a well-known author and trainer in the library world, to be truly effective, public library boards must adopt community development as their fundamental mission. To do this, library boards must know where the library is going and lead it to achieve certain specific results that will benefit the community. The library's mission must be seen to contribute to the community – its business geared to making the community a better place to live. The direction and means to reach goals and outcomes must be clearly set out in a strategic plan and the board must know in advance what factors will equate to success. When the board's term is over, it must leave knowing that the library accomplished specific, measurable, tangible results for the community.

Activities demonstrating that the Board is geared to community development

Library boards can only be effective in community development if they concentrate on looking outward towards the community. If the library fails to relate to the community or function as an integral part of it, there will be little effect. The following eight activities support community development.

1. **Get outside the doors. Successful community/library relationships are proactive.**
   Trustees and staff that take an active role in the civic life of the community create the 'two way street' that positions the library at the center of community. This activity outside the library, such as involvement with service clubs or chambers of commerce should be encouraged at every level.

2. **Find the leaders. A concerted effort to discover who's who in a community makes all the difference.**
   Reading local papers, asking long-time residents, attending civic events—all can be ways to find and work with the people who are already at the center of community activities.

3. **Be creative about what the library can contribute.**
   Go beyond the obvious and be prepared to say "yes" to new ideas that fall within your mission. This may work particularly well with municipal executives who may not fully appreciate all the library can offer.

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Community Development (continued)
Activities (continued)

4. **Discover and contribute to the unique capacities and conditions of the community.**
   Are there distinct cultural attributes of your community? Are there roles the library can play for the particular situations of neighborhood youth that can make the library indispensable?

5. **Support local businesses and institutions.**
   Set up reciprocal relationships with them, advertise your business-related services to them, and spend discretionary funds locally. All of these activities will rebound to the library's and community's benefit.

6. **Make the library building a community center.**
   Public buildings are community assets in many ways beyond simply being meeting spaces. The more people feel ownership, the more integrated the library becomes in community life. Host community meetings, hold an open house and invite the community in.

7. **Create a community-minded culture among trustees, library staff and volunteers.**
   All trustees and staff should be encouraged to learn names, attend events, develop relationships, and pay attention to community issues. Make the library a bridge to and among community populations.

8. **Support library investments that jump start community redevelopment efforts.**
   A new library in a neighborhood brings hope and attention to areas that may have experienced disinvestment. Support new branches with resources for building social networks. When libraries engage their communities, the best characteristics of both library and community are mobilized. Individual gifts, local associations and institutions, the neighborhood culture, economy and physical environment all come together to create unique neighborhood communities. With supportive leadership from trustees, municipal council and library administration, there is no limit to the role local branch libraries can play in building vibrant communities.

Adapted From: *The Engaged Library: Chicago Stories of Community Building*, Urban Library Council 2005

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Learn about your community

Whether you want to be an active member of the community, an effective trustee or a community leader, you will have to be familiar with the community's issues, resources, needs, power structure and decision-making processes. You could begin simply by reading your local newspaper regularly, attending community events, reading reports and familiarizing yourself with available services as well as community projects and activities. Close observation of the community as you interact with it will also provide significant insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the community.

According to the Library Trustee Development Program in _Trustee Tip # 22_, the library board is the link between the library and the community. The board's role is seen as critical to the success of the library: "..._without this connection, planning may be ineffective, resources may be jeopardized and the library may not reach its full potential in the community"._[3] However, all staff, board members, volunteers, members and patrons have an important role to play in community development by sharing information and insights about the community.

A more formal way to monitor your environment and share community information is to collectively – as staff and/or board - work your way through the six ways to describe your community advocated in the SOLS publication _Creating the Future You've Imagined: A Guide to Essential Planning_. The six ways are:
- Social and economic factors
- Lifestyles and interests
- Groups and affiliations
- Agencies and services
- Changes occurring
- Community assets

Assessing community assets and resources, needs and issues

To be able to work effectively in a community development context, you will need to gather information about community strengths or assets. It is helpful to undertake a comprehensive community assessment which will collect both qualitative and quantitative data on a wide range of community features. Often time and budget restraints will necessitate choosing between methods and limiting the assessment to particular areas of interest. It is important to keep in mind that your efforts to learn about the community can often be augmented by the work of other agencies and your municipality. Look for planning and needs assessment reports already in existence that profile the community.

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[3] "Connecting With Your Community". Library Trustee Development Program April 2002, Issue No. 22

Library Board Development Kit

Learn about your community (continued)
Assessing community assets and resources, needs and issues (continued)

There are many methods of community assessment used in community development practice. A few of the more common methods are listed below; additional information is contained in the resources section.

Compiling a community demographic profile is an excellent start. It is helpful to update the profile periodically so you will be able to track changes that occur within your community and respond accordingly. A demographic profile includes statistical information about age, gender, language, visible minority status, education, and family income. Community demographic profiles are available for approximately 6,000 communities in Canada, along with comparative figures for Ontario, from Statistics Canada's *Community Profiles* at www.statcan.ca .Other community statistics may also be of interest to you, such as crime rates, morbidity and mortality rates, or availability of affordable housing. Some of these are available from Statistics Canada, but local data may be obtained from local agencies; for example, the local police service will have crime statistics.

However, simply collecting information is not sufficient; it must be analyzed in order for it to be meaningful. For example, you might be interested in the relative proportion of seniors to youth in your community, or the proportion of the population for whom English is a second language. You will want to compare the most recent data available with previous years to identify the rate of growth of the population, changes in ethno-cultural patterns or age distribution, and assess the effect on current programming and services.

Statistical information isn't the only type of information that is important to collect. Finding out how residents perceive their community is also essential to effective community development practice. Community surveys, community asset mapping, environmental scans, focus groups and key informant interviews are other methods of obtaining community data. Volunteer Canada has posted a good Canadian publication called *Asset Mapping: A Handbook* by Tony Fuller, Denyse Guy and Carolyn Pletsch (at http://volunteer.ca/content/asset-mapping-handbook). This handbook outlines three approaches that community leaders can use to engage people in shaping the future of their community. The authors believe that asset mapping can be used as a starting place for community-based initiatives such as community development, strategic planning and organizational development.

The process of community asset mapping can be very energizing and rewarding for the participants, forcing people to focus on the good things in their community. Engaging a cross-agency group in this activity can be a tremendous community development strategy in and of itself and one in which the library can take a lead role.

Library Board Development Kit

Learn about your community (continued)

Listen to community members

You will not be able to learn everything you need to know by reading and observation. You will need to engage with others about their interests and perceptions to put it into context. You can contact community members through formal channels or informally by chatting with people who visit the library or who you encounter in other situations, such as shopping at local stores or attending school activities. By listening to the community you may identify an area in which there seems to be a common interest in making a change. Library staff and board members need to maintain regular contact with the community to collect enough information to make sound recommendations and decisions on library services and priorities and to identify important community issues.

Making it work

For a library to become a significant player in a community development process some particular organizational attributes are required. The library board and key personnel must be willing to take the initiative and tread into areas that are not traditionally seen as being within the mandate of the public library. They will need to be open to new ideas, new ways of doing things and developing new partnerships.

Community development work depends on public standing, credibility and building the library's profile in the community. Communication should flow both ways. It is important to tell the community what is going on and what is new at the library. Patrons and non-patrons alike should know how to contact the board. Are the names and profiles of board members on the library's website? Do board members have business cards to give to contacts they meet when attending and participating in community events? The library board can improve its visibility and strengthen accountability when the community can easily make contact.

Resources - Specific resources for community development include:
Ken Haycock's Community Development Sessions, Ontario Library Boards' Association from 2003. (All are available on the OLBA website at www.accessola.com.)
   o   Ontario Library Boards and Community Development: New Initiatives for New Times, or…No, this is not what we have always been doing…,"
   o   Community Development: The Board's Visioning Process; Roles and Relationships
Internet resources on Community Development
   •   Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCEDNet) is a national organization committed to strengthening Canadian communities by creating better economic opportunities and enhancing environmental and social conditions - http://www.ccednet-rcdec.ca/en
   •   Community Development Foundation: www.cdf.org.uk
   •   Community Engagement: Government of South Australia. http://www.lga.sa.gov.au/engage

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The board and the broader library community

There are other relationships that the board may wish to cultivate. From a broader perspective, the board may wish to promote library interests with provincial or federal politicians, depending on the local issues and projects. Making sure your provincial politicians are aware of your library and its role in the community helps to improve the library's profile and it is important to get your message out when you're not just asking for something.

It is important also for boards to look to the broader library community both to learn from others and to share valuable experience with others. Taking advantage of networking opportunities, such as Trustee Councils or other training opportunities, introduces your trustees to others in your region, and encourage exchanges of information, views and sharing experiences. Taking a more active role both increases knowledge of library issues and helps trustees feel that others share similar challenges.

If networking opportunities are not available in your area, consider making one happen. Invite trustees from neighbouring boards to attend a board meeting and join you to discuss current issues.

Finally, join other trustees in furthering the aims of Ontario's public libraries by joining the Ontario Library Boards Association (OLBA). A similar national organization, The Canadian Library Trustees' Association (CLTA), considers library issues across Canada.

In southern Ontario, library trustees can participate in the Trustee Councils. The purpose of the SOLS Trustee Councils is to provide:
- A communication link between SOLS and boards regarding SOLS' services;
- A forum for sharing information and an opportunity to hear how other boards deal with similar issues;
- Suggestions and support for trustee training; and,
- A pool of trustees from which to elect members to the SOLS board.

Trustee Councils meet twice a year in eight locations. All public library boards are requested to appoint a representative to its area Council but in addition, other trustees are welcome and encouraged to attend. The meetings are a combination of information sharing and updates on various issues of concern to public library trustees, including an update from a representative of Ontario Library Boards Association (OLBA) and the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries (FOPL). Training sessions are occasionally included in the meetings.

Clearly, participating in networking opportunities or other training opportunities with other trustees encourages exchange of information, increases knowledge of library issues and helps trustees to face challenges.